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**BONDAGE AND FREEDOM**

**A HISTORY OF MODERN INDIA**

**(1707-1947)**

**Volume II : Freedom-1858-1947**



# **BONDAGE AND FREEDOM**

**A HISTORY OF MODERN INDIA**

**(1707-1947)**

**VOLUME II : FREEDOM 1858-1947**

**BISHESHWAR PRASAD**

**D. LITT.**



**RAJESH PUBLICATIONS**

**NEW DELHI**

**ALLAHABAD**

*Published by*

**M.L. Gupta**

**RAJESH PUBLICATIONS**  
1, Ansari Road, Daryaganj,  
New Delhi - 110002.

*Printed in India by*

**Ashokas Press**

**New Delhi - 110005,**  
**at Saraswati Printer's**  
**Maujpur, Delhi.**

**First Published, 1979**

**Price : Rs. 125.00**

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**B ONDAGE AND FREEDOM**

## *Preface*

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This second volume of the book 'Bondage and Freedom' covers the period from 1858 to 1947 and is mainly devoted to the efforts for winning freedom for India from British sway and shake off the bondage which had emasculated the people. The main thrust has been towards discussing the forces which started the movement for freedom by non-violent methods initiated by the new middle-class and carried forward by the common people ending in winning independence under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. It was a comprehensive movement to free the people from intellectual, cultural, social, economic and political grip of British imperialism. However, constitutional and political aspect has deserved greater attention though economic and other factors have not been ignored. I am aware of the great lacunae that social and cultural forces which had a weighty role in awakening the people have not been treated adequately. But the subject deserves a special volume and I had neither the time nor preparation for writing it. In the beginning some chapters relating to foreign policy of the Government of India and expansion of British Empire beyond the Indian borders have been included. Their relevance is that the exploitation of Indian finance and manpower for imperial purposes fortified the resolve to gain freedom and thus save the people from growing poverty.

I trust the story as narrated in this volume will give a fuller picture of the main stages of freedom movement and thus act as background to the various studies which deal exhaustively



with various phases of the struggle for independence.

I am thankful to Sri Suraj Din Sahu who typed the entire manuscript and helped me otherwise. I am grateful to my life long friend and associate Late Dr. Banarasi Prasad Saksena, who constantly encouraged me. Lastly I must express my gratitude to Shri M.L. Gupta of Rajesh Publications who gladly took over the publication of the book.

I have used a number of books on various aspects by learned authors, Indian and foreign, to whom I am greatly obliged. The History of the Freedom Movement in India by my late teacher Dr. Tara Chand has been particularly of considerable help. But the views and interpretations are my own and I own full responsibility for them.

New Delhi, 1979

—BISHESHWAR PRASAD

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## *Aftermath of the Revolt*

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The Revolt of 1857 is the great divide in the history of Modern India. With it ended the tenure of the East India Company and the Government of the Indian dominions was transferred to the Crown of England. But this change was merely superficial, for even in the earlier period the supreme authority of the Parliament and Her Majesty's Government was fully recognised and normally asserted. Hence this transfer of control did not have great significance. What is more relevant is the metamorphosis in the outlook of British rulers and the spirit in which administration of India was conducted. Also remarkable is the attitude of the people of the country towards the rulers and their principles and policies of government. A new awakening was dawning in the land setting new dimensions to their political aspirations and social, cultural and economic aims. The great Leviathan was rising from stupor, political consciousness was growing, leading to the demand for share in power and liberalisation of administration. Social conscience was also awakened resulting in the denunciation of age-long social evils and inequalities, religious dogma and ritual superstitions. The new middle class keenly felt economic injustice, growing poverty, ignorance and misery of the people. Thus, while on the side of the rulers new imperialism with all its implications and wide ramifications determined the policy and complexion of government, on the other side, a national movement inspired by the longing for freedom from alien domination gripped the imagination of the people, preparing them increasingly for sacrifice in

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the cause of liberty. For nearly a century this conflict of ideals, clash between the forces of imperialism and nationalism, marked the course of events. The Indian people had grown conscious of their bondage and strove to break the shackles which bound them and breathe the fresh and fragrant air of freedom.

The nineteenth century saw extensive development of imperialism. The commercial imperialism of the eighteenth century was soon transformed into industrial imperialism, with its twin—capital-investment imperialism. European empires Britain foremost among them, had sought overseas dominions to promote commerce, seek markets to absorb their industrial products and obtain supplies of raw materials to feed their industries or even secure food supplies. By the middle of the nineteenth century was added another motive, namely investment of surplus capital accruing from the profits of imperial exploitation. British capital was seeking avenues in India for investment in plantations, mining and railways, whose construction was pursued by the government, in a large measure, in the second half of the nineteenth century. Economic profit thus came to be the main impetus behind British imperialism in India, and political control was utilised to provide “security to the capitalists both in the matter of export and import trade and also to their investment” here. This “basic economic motive” was further supplemented by “power, pride and prestige”. The military and economic resources of India considerably enhanced the power of Great Britain in comparison with other European empires and added to its prestige. Further, the dependency provided avenues of employment to British youth who took great pride in the achievements of their rule, which were often exaggerated. Hobson in his ‘Imperialism, a study’ has listed some of these. He wrote, “we have established a wider and more internal peace than India had ever known. . . . We have raised the standard of justice by fair and equal administration of laws; we have regulated and probably reduced the burden of taxation. . . . For the instruction of the people we have introduced a public system of schools and colleges. . . . Roads, railways, and a network of canals have facilitated communication and transport and an extensive system of scientific irrigation has improved the productiveness of the soil; the mining of coal, gold, and other minerals has been greatly deve-

loped; in Bombay and elsewhere cotton mills with modern machinery have been set-up and the organisation of other machine industries is helping to find employment for the population of large cities. Tea, coffee, indigo, jute, tobacco, and other important crops have been introduced into Indian agriculture. We are gradually breaking down many of the religious and social superstitions which are against humanity and retard progress, and even the deeply rooted caste system is modified wherever British influence is felt". This sums up the constructive, beneficent output of imperial rule. But there was another side also that of stunting the moral calibre of the people, unemployment, increasing poverty and mass starvation, dislocation of the traditional industry of India without any substitute, and the denial of share in the administration and policy-making apparatus of government, and the inculcation of fear and sense of inferiority among the people.

Hobson in subsequent paragraphs tried to analyse the character of British rule and has thrown doubt on the real benefits which might have accrued to the people from the pursuit of economic and political imperialism, then the creed of the British Government. While not fully subscribing to the criticism that "British Government is draining the economic life-blood of India and dragging her population into lower and more hopeless poverty," that administration "is very expensive; that one-third of the money raised by taxation flows out of the country without return; that India is made to support an army admittedly excessive for purposes of self-defence, and even to bear the cost of wars in other parts of the Empire, while nearly the whole of the interest on capital invested in India is spent out of the country", Hobson admitted that "we have not succeeded in giving any considerable economic prosperity to India." Famines were endemic, and starvation "the chronic enemy" had not been warded off from the mass of the people. Also, industrialism had not added to material prosperity, rather it had led to the "decadence of the arts and architecture, weaving, metal work and pottery, in which India had been famed from time immemorial." The British economic and political system had also not brought with it "popular liberty" and "self-government", which had necessarily followed from Industrial Revolution in Great Britain. In conclusion, Hobson adheres

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to the comment of Seeley, a great advocate of British imperialism, that "We doubt whether with all the merits of our administration, the subjects of it are happy. We may even doubt whether our rule is preparing them for a happier condition, whether it may not be sinking them lower in misery". In India the worst features of British imperialism were visible in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the entire political machinery and economic structure were yoked to the furtherance of the vested interests of British finance and industrial-capitalism which determined the policies of the government there. Expansion of empire was the necessary concomitant of the need to cater to these interests, and the British Government in the years following the Revolt of 1857 was continuously engaged in counteracting the rivalry of other European imperialisms and extending the territorial limits of its own empire. India was the centre of such expansive activities and its armies and revenues were yoked to that purpose. The entire administrative apparatus was engaged in the furtherance of imperial interests, thereby relatively neglecting the pursuit of either the increase in the prosperity of the people or training in self-government and giving to the subject population the benefits of democracy and liberty.

There were three major bases of imperialism; possession of a powerful military machine, monopoly of superior services and administrative agencies and the belief among the subject people of their inferiority in every field and the superiority of the ruling class. To these was added the myth that foreign imperial rule was the main agent of amelioration and the policies adopted were essentially beneficial to the prosperity and development of the common people. Every endeavour was made to generate the belief in the benignant nature of alien rule, and that without its successful operation the people would remain steeped in ignorance and superstition, and would be victims of oppression, inequality and exploitation by their own countrymen. British empire in India rested on these foundations. In its earlier stages, influenced by the myopic view of exploiting the conquered country for the advantage of the ruling power, little heed was given to the welfare of the people and their economy was ruined. Far-sighted administrators did not desist from pointing to the injurious nature of the prevailing policy and had

indicated the path of amelioration and leading the people towards assuming responsibility for their own administration, which was to be the goal of British rule. The Revolt of 1857, however, shook the confidence of the rulers and compelled them to adopt measures, "going beyond the sphere of law and order", pertaining to "education, social reform, development of transport and communications, agriculture, sanitation etc." They also realised that "the permanent interests of the empire demanded that an orderly and efficient system of administration should be established, peace should be maintained, the resource of the country so developed as to fulfil the economic needs of the home country, educational facilities so provided as to train atleast a section of the people to understand the ways of the foreign rulers and to assist them in the work of administration". The pursuit of such measures, however tardy, found response in the educated Indians whose acquiescence and even acceptance of the foreign government as "a great deliverance from the anarchy" of the earlier century was gained. But this willing tolerance of imperial rule was not of long duration and consciousness grew that "imperialism by its very nature was incompatible with democracy and self-government and little disposed to self-liquidation. The basis of imperialism is force and its instrument is military power". (Tara Chand) This new consciousness was the genesis of the movement for freedom, towards which the energies of the educated classes were directed, bringing into the effort gradually the vast mass of the population. In the years after 1858, India witnessed the full play of imperialism, on the one hand, and the rising tide of nationalism, on the other.

The beneficent part of imperial rule was merely a mask for pursuing the motive of economic profit and providing security to the industrialists and capitalists for carrying on their export and import trade and reaping profit from their investments in the dependant country. And as Dr. Tara Chand has pointed out "this aspect of imperialism cancelled most of the benefits claimed by its apologists and admirers. This face of imperialism presented ugly features—economic exploitation, impoverishment of the masses, dwarfing of moral stature and dignity of the subject people. Imperialist Britain treated India as a satellite, whose main function was to sweat and labour for the master,



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to subserve its economy and to enhance the glory and prestige of the Empire". The people were reduced to the status of mere hewers of wood and drawers of water. The entire mechanism of government, both in its civil and military aspects, was directed to subserve imperialism and add to the affluence of the capitalist classes of Britain and enhance the prosperity of the ruling race.

Before the Revolt of 1857, Indian Army was composed of British and Indian forces. The first was formed by the regiments primarily recruited in the British Isles and lent for service in India, and such Europeans as were enlisted in India. The Indian portion was predominantly Indian, commanded by British officers who held the higher appointments. In 1856, the proportion of Indians was seven to nine for every one European. The Bengal army was chiefly recruited from the Brahman and Rajput castes of the North-West Province and Bihar, and they played a prominent part in rising against foreign rule and fighting the battles of Indian independence. The rulers realised the danger from the numerical preponderance of the Indian section of the army and its homogenous composition. Hence this disproportion had to be remedied in the interest of security of their empire. Immediately, as a reaction to the events of 1857, the primary object of the foreign government was to keep the Indian forces under effective check and the only means then contemplated was to have adequate better armed European troops in India. The Peel Commission of 1859 recommended that a force of 80,000 Europeans would be required of which 50,000 were to be for Bengal, and 15,000 each for Bombay and Madras. The proportion of Indian and European elements was to be not more than two to one in the Bengal army and three to one in the other presidential armies. Thus the Indian force was to be of the strength of 190,000 men. Consequently, the Indian force was considerably reduced. Apart from numbers the Indian portion of the army was dispossessed of artillery and arms of precision. The British troops were given the latest weapons and they had the sole control of artillery and arsenals. Improvement in communications made for greater mobility and thereby added to the superiority of the European wing of the army. In later years, this disparity was remedied but the experience of the Revolt did not permit the

rulers to have confidence in the Indian troops and the European check on them was adopted as a principle. The respective roles of the two wings were also distinct. The British troops were to operate as a striking force and crush any combination of Indian troops or the chiefs of Indian states, while, the Indian section was confined to garrison duties in peace, and had merely a subsidiary role. Another device adopted was in the composition of Indian regiments, every endeavour being made to prevent cohesion and development of *esprit de corps*. Lytton wanted the army to be "built in mutiny-tight compartments", because as he wrote, "The more like the regiments are to each other in organisation and other characteristics, the more likely are they to be similar in feeling and prejudices, and therefore more likely to catch a mutinous contagion, when once started, from each other". Indian people were categorised into martial and non-martial classes and recruitment was generally confined to the former. Moreover, communal grouping was also adopted, and some such regiments were formed of Sikhs, Rajputs, Jats, Afridis, Baluchis and Panjab Muslims. Some regiments were also organised on the system of general mixture and men of different castes or classes were mixed promiscuously in companies and troops. Class company system was also adopted. All these subterfuges had one motive of making the empire safe from the insurrection of the Indian army. Suspicion dictated all such measures and communal virus was introduced in the composition of the army. The numbers of Hindus and Muslims were well balanced in regiments. Also, Indians, even of the highest status, found no place in the commissioned ranks, the utmost they could attain was rank of a subedar-major, far below even an ensign. Every effort was made to prevent the birth of "common feeling", spirit of fraternising and combining among the troops. Lack of trust in the Indians determined the policy of British rulers and such an army was used for the expansion of the empire and maintaining secure their hold on India.

The second pillar of imperial strength was the monopoly of higher services by British subjects. Cornwallis had initiated the policy of confining the Indians to subordinate services only all positions of importance and trust being reserved for the Europeans. Some improvement in the situation was made

by Bentinck. He admitted Indians into the lower judicial service or even in the executive wing as deputy collectors of revenue or judicial magistrates under the British collector, who was the head of the district. The charter of 1833 and the Proclamation of 1858 accorded equality of privilege to the Indians, irrespective of distinctions of race, caste or creed for admission into higher services; but it was a theoretical recognition of equality of status, without making any impact on actual participation in offices of trust. In the existing system of government, where officers of the Indian Civil Service were intimately associated with the policy making apparatus, and not merely its executants, it was unlikely that Indians would be admitted into the sacred precincts. Recruitment to the Indian Civil Service, as some other services, was by competition in England, and very few Indians in their social condition and unequal facilities of education could hope to compete with success there. By the Act of 1861, reservation of posts was made for the members of the Indian Civil Service and thus way barred for junior officers, locally recruited, to rise to such posts. Agitation for simultaneous examinations being held in India and England had little effect and even the Parliamentary vote in its favour was ignored. Till 1920, therefore, the number of Indians in higher services was very small. British statesmen brazen-facedly repudiated claims of equality, for they had low opinion of Indian character. Sir Charles Wood held that Indians, though not deficient in learning and acuteness, were wanting in character and moral position. Lawrence wanted the Englishman to be in the front rank, for he had a low opinion of the Bengali middle class, who did not have the competence to make good rulers and administrators and were absolutely unfit for governing the martial populations of Punjab. Northbrook and Argyll did not consider public competition as suited to India. The latter decried the application of the principle in the case of Indians, for he wrote: "It is notorious that in their case mere intellectual acuteness is no indication of ruling power. In vigour, in courage, and in the administrative ability some of the races of India, most backward in education, are well known to be superior to other races, which intellectually are much more advanced. In a competitive examination the chances of a Bengalee would probably be superior to the chances of a Pathan

or a Sikh. It would, nevertheless, be a dangerous experiment to place a successful student from the colleges of Calcutta in command over any of the martial tribes of Upper India". To satisfy Indian aspirations, a statutory civil service, of inferior status, was introduced but it was soon discontinued.

But agitation did not abate. A way out was found by the Aitchison Commission of 1886, which recommended the creation of a Provincial Civil Service, to which some posts, formerly reserved for the Indian Civil Service, were transferred, and recruitment was made by nomination to executive, judicial, police, education, public works and such other branches. No change was suggested in the mode of recruitment to the higher civil service which was mainly to be composed of British citizens. The existing system was defended by Kimberley, the Secretary of State, on the ground of efficiency of administration and orderly government for which preponderant retention of British element was essential, for in its absence efficiency would deteriorate and chaos would ensue. The adequacy of European element in civil service was stoutly defended by Curzon, for in his view, the Englishman "possesses partly by heredity, partly by upbringing and partly by education, the knowledge of the principles of Government, the habits of mind and the strength of character, which was essential for the task". Moreover, he held that in many special departments requiring scientific or technical knowledge, "a strong European admixture and sometime even a European preponderance" was necessary. There was no relaxation in this principle, and even when the principle of simultaneous examination for the Indian Civil Service was conceded in 1920, a formula was adopted by which only after 25 years could the Indian element attain the proportion of fifty per cent. Lloyd George did not mince matters and publicly announced that the British officers formed the steel frame of the administrative structure and they must be maintained in full strength and concessions and privileges accorded to them to make it worth their while to serve in India. Thus, throughout British rule, the higher echelons of civil service, police and such other branches of administration pertaining to law and order, were filled by recruitment of Europeans. The highest offices of provincial governors, members of executive councils, divisional or district chiefs and many others were in

sole possession of British officers, and Indians were generally barred from places of trust and policy determination. The Indians occupied positions of inferiority and were denied share in the government of their own country.

Generally the average Englishman in India had treated the Indian people as 'inferior', and the missionaries disdainfully denounced their religion and had contempt for their social customs. No doubt many features of the social life and religious practices in India were worthy of condemnation, and many reformers exerted themselves to purge Indian society of these evils. But during and after the revolt of 1857, as a reprisal and under the influence of aggressive imperialism, the behaviour of Englishmen towards the vanquished subjects was marked by the spirit of racial antagonism. The old attitude of guardianship of the inferior flock held by the 'superior race', characterised by "pride, prejudice and haughtiness" was transformed into one of bitterness. "Detestation, contempt, ferocity vengeance" became marked features of English character in India. Trevelyan in 1866 wrote: "Then from the lowest depths of nature emerged those sombre, ill-omened instincts of whose very existence we had ceased to be aware. Intense compassion intense wrath, the injured pride of a great nation surged in upon the agitated community. It was tacitly acknowledged that mercy, charity, the dignity and sacredness of human life... must be put aside till our sway was restored and our name avenged". The Indians were represented as "little better than wild beasts" who must be ruled "with a rod of iron". The Friend of India wrote, "All modes of action based on the false theory are false likewise. Any relaxation of our military control, any attempt to cover the steel hand with a velvet glove must be temporarily abandoned. The Asiatic... respects only the strong, and his rulers must prove that their armed strength is irresistible". The use of 'Nigger' for the Indians was a popular expression in English homes and clubs, and not infrequently they were referred to, "as a nation of liars, perjurers, forgerers, devoid of gratitude... people addicted to adulation, dishonesty, falsehood and perjury". The Prince of Nabha, speaking in the Imperial Legislative Council in 1908, rightly complained that "Indians of high and respectable positions are not properly addressed, communicated or treated by British

officials ... Indian gentlemen are sometimes bodily expelled from railway carriages". Their treatment as lower beings, unworthy of sitting along with the white man deterred Indian gentleman of rank from travelling in higher classes in railway trains. Flogging of Indians was a common feature, with its growing into an institution in jails after the passing of the Whipping Act in 1864. In one year as many as 11,000 prisoners, according to the testimony of Mr O'Donnell, were flogged in the jails of Bengal. Even outside, planters of Bihar indulged in this pastime inflicting injury on tenants in the village and even gentlemen at railway stations. This "spirit of reaction" was fomented by the British soldiers, and the British planters and proud English women. The soldier and the planter contemptuously called the Indians as "blackies, darkies, niggers and Boxwala's". One of them took pride in referring to them as "stones under our feet. If they do not do what we want, we pull their turbans off their heads and turn them down". Blunt has mentioned in his book 'India under Ripon, the tip given by a planter who said, "Of course it is impossible to get on without being bullies now and then. If you strike a nigger and he thinks you are afraid to hit him hard he runs into a certainty before a Magistrate, but if you give it to him well, he knows he deserves it. You must be careful, however, not to overdo it, for they are very soft and four out of five have enlarged spleens, and they are capable, without any exaggeration, of dying to spite you". Nothing could better exemplify the callousness of ordinary Englishmen to the life of Indians. And the instances of the British judiciary letting off or imposing extremely light punishment on Europeans guilty of man slaughter where an Indian was concerned, clearly reveal this aspect of the inequity of administration prompted by the feelings of superiority of race.

The Vernacular Press Act and the Arms Act adopted by Lytton's government were a vivid proof of his scorn for Indians and differential treatment towards them. Surendranath Banerjee termed the Arms Act as "mischievous because it made an irritating and invidious distinction between Europeans and Indians". The law was rightly treated as a "badge of racial inferiority" and evoked considerable resentment in the country. The Vernacular Press Act, by making a distinction between

English and Vernacular newspapers was no less a mark of racial inferiority. And the Ilbert Bill was a rank admission of racial inferiority of Indians. Writers of history did not hesitate to misrepresent the socio-religious ideas and customs of the Indian people, and failed to find any redeeming features in the previous administrations. Mill in his History of India, which was a text book for the civilian trainers, vehemently denounced Hindu culture and character. According to him Indian politics merely showed "disgusting state of weak and profligate barbarism, which is the natural condition of government among such a passive people as the Hindus." Their society was described as "a degrading and pernicious system of subordination." Hindu religion, he wrote, was "built upon the most enormous and tormenting superstition that ever harassed and disgraced any portion of mankind", and their character was maligned as being prompted by "insincerity, mendacity and perfidy." Elliot in "History of the Muslim Rule" did not find anything notable or benignant in the government of the Mughals. This tradition of decrying Indian character their history was reflected in the speech of Lord Curzon at the Calcutta University. He said, "I hope I am making no false or arrogant claim when I say that the highest ideal of truth is to a large extent a Western conception. I do not thereby mean to claim that Europeans are universally or even generally truthful, Still less do I mean that Asiatics deliberately or habitually deviate from truth...but undoubtedly truth took a high place in the moral code of the West before it has been similarly honoured in the East, when craftiness and diplomacy always have been held in much repute." And his Secretary of State Lord George Hamilton called Indians as a Nation of Savages "criminal lunatics" who were wholly unfit for liberty. Democracy and all the institutions associated with it were unthinkable for Indians and their lot was to submit to the rule of the superior race of Britons. No wonder this attitude born of the sense of imperialism and the purpose of perpetuating the subordination of Indians to British rule, was adopted by the British rulers as a symptom of imperialism which held sway at the time.

The aftermath of the Revolt was the intensification of the spirit of bitterness and racial hatred, particularly in British circles. The faint traces of liberalism in the attitude and policies

of the rulers which were found in statements by leaders of political thought in England or in some of their measures of administration disappeared and instead revenge marked the tone of government officers, both civil and military. Zacharias rightly maintains that "The old sympathy with India changed to a feeling of repugnance. Contact between the Indians and Englishmen, except in a formal, official capacity disappeared." Sir Charles Wood admitted that confidence had yielded place "to a feeling of distrust" that the feeling of antagonism was extending itself lower among the natives and higher among the officers. Revenge was invoked by the Anglo-Indians. One of them was reported to have said, "If our soldiers knock down every filthy idol they see and lay every masjid level with the ground ; and if they pollute every shrine and plunder everyone worth plundering I shall not be sorry." Such distrust and antagonism to the Indians naturally influenced the behaviour of officers and coloured the administrative policies. Their effect on the military system has been discussed earlier, so also the continuing effort to keep away the Indians from the portals of government. And whenever any action was taken to treat the subject people liberally and raise their status, the entire Anglo-Indian opinion and their press raised vehement clamour against such measures. The proposed Ilbert Bill brought forth tremendous hue and cry and Ripon was maligned. And throughout the last century these sentiments of hatred and anger gripped the British mind. However, antagonism was not one sided. The Indians also could not forget for long the brutal conduct of the conquerors in suppressing the revolt and the atrocities which they had perpetrated. Memories of cruelty and injustice took long to get dimmed. In the words of Ahluwalia, "the wounds kept festering and the chasm of mutual hatred and distrust constantly tended to widen." On the British side, "bureaucratic aloofness, racial pride, spirit of revenge, mutual distrust, the policy of divide and rule, as well as over Europeanization of services were some of the repercussions of the debacle of 1857." On the Indian side, the atmosphere was no less charged with violence and animosity to the rulers. The situation was explosive and for many years a spirit of revolt gripped many sections of the population. The first such rising came about 1860 in Bengal in protest against the iniquities and



terrorism practised by the Indigo planters. It was soon followed by Santhal rising and it took many years to restore order in the tribal regions. The Deccan agrarian riots were another instance of violent protest against the land revenue system and the oppressions committed by money-lenders. The Kooka movement in Panjab and the Wahabi defiance and preparation to mount a subversive movement were other symptoms of the hatred of British rule and detestation of their economic and political measures. This spirit did not, however, die with the suppression of their risings and revived in full vigour in the revolutionary and terrorist activities of militant nationalism which became a marked feature of the last decade of the nineteenth century and early decades of the present century.

However, the main trend of resistance to British imperialism was non-violent in character. Its leadership was provided by the new intellectual class which had imbibed western education and been nourished on the ideas of liberalism and ideals of democracy and representative government which were then prevalent in England. Under their guidance the nature of struggle became non-violent, constitutional and popular when the people were drawn within its fold. The freedom movement then transcended its political limits and comprehended the various facets of national life. The new educated community, deprived of avenues of suitable employment and denied access to places of trust in the administration of their country, grew increasingly disaffected against the government and strove to substitute democratic institutions for the irresponsible bureaucratic administration controlled by a foreign people, immersed in the pursuit of imperial ends and contemptuous of the character, attainments and capability of the Indian middle classes. To achieve that purpose this section advocated change in every sphere of national life. It held radical views in the matter of social reform for it believed that without a wholesale purge in the traditional Indian system, and society conforming to western standards of behaviour, political progress was not practicable. It stood for gradualness in political progress and was not averse to British association to enable the Indian people to be trained in parliamentary democracy for the period of apprenticeship prior to assuming government in their hands. The emergence of local political associations in the presidency towns

leading ultimately to the foundation of the Indian National Congress was ushered in by the efforts of the new leadership. Initially these associations advocated gradualness, moderation and constitutionalism in political progress. But the irresponsiveness of the British Government and full realisation of the economic exploitative nature of imperialism, together with the increasing poverty of the agricultural classes, and absence of media of employment for the artisan classes as well as the impact of British tariff policy and adverse pressure of plantation industries on the infant Indian industries, altered the character of national movement from liberalism to extremism. Demand for self-government, Home Rule or Swaraj, became insistent for the attainment of which resort was had to direct action non-violent in nature. The history of the period following the suppression of the Revolt of 1857 is thus primarily the story of the rising tide of nationalism in its various manifestations, leading towards the freedom of the country from alien rule.

The aggressive, expansive nature of imperialism was evidenced by the efforts to bring the weak neighbouring states, forming the glacis of India's defence system, within the orbit of British influence. The second half of the nineteenth century was the period of expansion of Europe into the continents of Asia and Africa, where vast empires were being carved out by the great powers of Europe. This race for empire created rivalries and, not until the mechanism of partitioning of spheres of influence by agreement was evolved, military confrontation was the sole mode of preservation of their respective gains. Iran, Afghanistan, Tibet and Burma were the regions where British imperialism was brought into conflict with the ambitions of Russia, France or Germany. The Government of India, its military potential and financial resources were employed to bring these states within British influence and exclude hostile European influences from these regions. It may be pertinent to review the Indo-British policy and the means adopted for its implementation at this stage.

## *The Quest for Scientific Frontier*

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In the previous volume we have narrated the steps by which the British Indian empire attained the natural frontiers of India, both in the north-west and the east, while the long coastline had been dominated earlier. An empire is essentially expansionist, which process moves on till it encounters unconquerable obstacle. Earlier empires were governed by greed of territory or desire for overlordship but modern empires have an added motive of commercial gain and economic dominance which provides the spurt for aggression, transgressing the frontiers of weaker neighbouring states. In India, the British empire was prompted by two primary interests, which were the expansion of commerce and the protection of the empire. These led to acquisition of new territories and extension of spheres of influence and for these the economic motive was more dominant. And in the fulfilment of these objectives, the British government was brought into conflict, from the beginning of its contact with India, with other competing imperialisms of Europe. Initially the British had to fight the Portuguese and the Dutch to obtain a secure footing on Indian soil. But soon opposition from these quarters had been eliminated and in its place the danger from the French imperial interests assumed serious dimension. French rivalry affected British policies, diplomatic or otherwise, throughout the eighteenth century. For a few years after 1763 there was comparative lull in the acuteness of French opposition, to be revived in all its intensity and fear-someness when, in the closing years of the century, France went through the phase of revolutionary experiment and Napoleonic

imperialism. His 'Egyptain adventure synchronising with Tipu's flirtation with the French and his seeking support from West Asian sovereign powers, as well as with the impending threat of the Kabul ruler Zaman Shah's invasion from the north-west, led to the emergence of British interest in Asian kingdoms beyond India's north-western frontier and the foundation of a far-reaching Central Asian policy, which became a dominant feature of India's foreign policy in the subsequent period'.

Napoleon Buonaparte assumed control of the revolutionary government of France and led his armed forces into Egypt on the way to the east to destroy British hold on India, for the very existence of French revolutionary state depended on the weakness of England as the supreme naval and colonial power in Europe. This adventure was frustrated by his defeat in Egypt and the subsequent naval disaster at Trafalgar. The danger to British eastern empire abated for the moment, to be revived in greater intensity when after the peace of Tilsit in 1807, Napoleon and Russian Czar decided to unite their armed strength to dislodge the British from their position in India. The joint plan was to invade India through the territories of Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan; but not long after the two Emperors were gripped in mutual fight and the ambitious adventure remained abortive. However, on both the occasions, the British governments in London and Calcutta grew alarmed and as a reaction developed a foreign policy which determined action for a century. In their quest for measures to counteract the Franco-Russian menace they desired to create a block of friendly Asian states which would deny passage to the aggressor through their territories and oppose his march India-wards. Iran, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Sind and Panjab were the states thus approached and missions were despatched to them to seek their friendly countenance and support in the mutual task of combating the Franco-Russian invasion. Outside of Indian territories, Iran and Afghanistan were the most important states with which friendly relations were sought, though active steps were also taken to enter into close relations with the chief of Muscat and other rulers in the Persian Gulf and Arab coastal regions. Initially greater stress was laid on dealings with Iran, Afghanistan assuming a secondary place.

In 1800, Malcolm was sent from India to Tehran to contract an engagement with the Shah 'to expel and extirpate the French if they set foot on the Persian soil. Gold helped to achieve this object'; but Napoleonic adventure not materialising the British-Indian government grew indifferent to the alliance. However, when the danger revived after the Treaty of Tilsit, fresh missions were directed to the Asian capitals. Malcolm was again sent to Tehran but he failed to make any mark on the Shah's policy and French influence was not ousted. His proposal for a naval demonstration to compel the Shah to yield to British demands was not agreed upon. But Sir Hereford Jones, sent from London, succeeded in making the Preliminary Treaty in 1809, which was confirmed in 1814 by the Definitive Treaty, by playing upon the sentiment of Russian danger to Iran. By this Treaty, it was agreed that all alliances between Persia and European nations hostile to Great Britain stand null and void, and all European armies were to be prevented from entering Persia, if hostile to Great Britain. Mutual assistance against Russia was stipulated and the British undertook to train the Iranian army. This agreement continued for some years, but when Russia invaded Persia and compelled the Shah to submit to the humiliating Treaty of Turkamanchai, the British refrained from aiding the Shah, and that brought about the end of friendliness between Iran and Great Britain. Rather, the Shah drifted into intimate relationship with the Czar whose influence dominated the diplomatic and internal policies of the government of Iran.

Subsequent to the Treaty of Tehran British policy had grown definitely anti-Russian in its trend, and it was natural also because with the extinction of the French empire and emergence of Russian supremacy in eastern Europe, the Czarist empire remained the only European power to entertain proposals of aggressive expansion in the east; and this fact was bound to disturb the equanimity of the British, inspired as they were by the dual purpose of safeguarding their Indian empire and exploiting the commerce of Central Asia. And henceforth the two giants, Russia and Britain, were brought into perennial conflict for supremacy in Central Asia. British fear of Russian invasion of India, however unreal, was genuine and thus in the prevailing sentiment of Russophobia, they clutched

at the intervening Asian kingdoms of Herat, Kabul and Kalat whose security from Russian domination was considered as the *sine qua non* of India's protection. After 1828 Iran had drifted into Russian camp; hence early reliance on that state to serve British imperial interests was substituted by growing opposition and preventing the Shah from intruding into the borders of Afghanistan. At the same time the Shah was led by Russian encouragement to direct his attention to the recovery of the provinces on his eastern frontier, and that involved him into conflict with the rulers of Herat and Kabul. Inevitably, in this situation, the British hinged their policy on the inviolability of these two states. Thus commenced the definite pro-Afghanistan trend in British policy, any danger to the security of which was resented and measures adopted to keep Russian influence at a distance from enveloping Kabul or Herat. Thus Afghanistan became the field of British diplomatic activity and India's foreign policy was geared to the preservation of Afghan independence and securing the friendship of its ruler. This policy continued to govern the thinking and action of the Government of India throughout the nineteenth century.

At the close of the eighteenth century, Wellesley was alarmed by the impending threat of the invasion of India by Zaman Shah, the ruler of Kabul. But the danger did not materialise and soon after Kabul witnessed recurrent palace revolutions ousting one ruler after another to seek refuge and stipend from the British in India. The last of these was Shah Shuja who lost his kingdom which was gripped by Dost Muhammad Khan, ascending the throne in 1826 and consolidating his position in the next ten years. The new ruler had been keen on friendship with the British which he genuinely desired owing to his fear of Russian and Persian aggression, but the Government of India showed little interest to win his affection. The dominant mood in Calcutta was to hang on to the friendship of Ranjit Singh, and all approaches by Dost Muhammad to seek British intercession in reacquiring Peshawar, which the Panjab ruler had occupied, met with sublime indifference on the ground that the Government of India could not interfere with the affairs of an independent state. It was in this state of diplomatic developments that Shah of Iran, Muhammad Shah, repeated

the invasion of Herat in 1837, as its ruler Kamran had been guilty of breach of faith and aggressive action against Seistan, a coveted province of Persia. In this eastern enterprise the Shah had the support of Russia whose protege he had become by then; hence all attempts by the British to dissuade him from this adventure became nugatory. The siege of Herat, however, taxed all the resources and energy of the Shah who failed to make a breach in the fort. The sturdy resistance of the besieged has been attributed to the presence of a British officer Eldred Pottinger with the garrison. Diplomacy was also harnessed to save Herat and Mc Neill arrived in the Iranian camp to persuade the Shah to raise the siege, but timely arrival of the Russian envoy Count Simonich, with his offer of the services of a Russian officer, strengthened the Iranian resolve to press the siege harder. But success baulked the Shah as resistance grew stiffer. Meanwhile, the British staged a naval demonstration in the Gulf and occupied the island of Kharak. This combination of open British hostility and invincibility of the fort of Herat compelled Muhammad Shah to beat a hasty retreat. Thus was Herat saved from falling under Russian influence for the moment; but the events of 1837-38 revealed the delicateness of situation in the north-west of India, posing danger to the easy route into India by way of Herat and Kandahar. The Government of India appreciated the importance of Afghanistan and desired a friendly subordinate government there.

The first British contact with the Kabul government was made in 1809 when Elphinstone was sent to secure the goodwill and support of the Amir against possible Franco-Russian invasion, and the envoy returned satisfied with the response of the Afghan ruler. For many years thereafter, a state of supine indifference governed British policy and all approaches by Dost Muhammad were turned down. Not only that but it appears the Government of India gave countenance to Shah Shuja's efforts to win back his throne and viewed with satisfaction his invasion of Afghanistan in 1834, which however failed to make any impact on the people there. Only when Herat was threatened by Iran and there were clear signs of aggressive Russian interest in this region that Calcutta was stirred into action. They sent Sir Edward Burnes to Kabul by

way of Sind on an ostensible economic mission, to conciliate the rulers of Afghanistan so "as to secure their friendly cooperation in resisting the tide of Russo-Persian invasion." Dost Muhammad was naturally inclined to win British friendship for he was equally alarmed by the increasing Russo-Iranian expansionism in the vicinity of his frontiers. But, in spite of the yawning threat to Herat which could develop into danger to Kabul, the Amir was more concerned with the fate of Peshawar which he wished to acquire with British help. This obstinate insistence on Peshawar at the moment when the menace on his north-western frontier was mounting and Iranian ambitions of occupying Kandahar and even Kabul were no secret, indicates political blindness and absence of balanced thinking. The British were not prepared to offend Ranjit Singh and had no other price to pay the Amir to win his friendship. Despite repeated pressure by Burnes to meet Dost Muhammad, even halfway, Auckland remained obdurate, and Burnes had to return to India empty-handed. Amir wanted tangible proof of British friendliness, but their envoy was not commissioned to exceed mere assurances of sympathy and goodwill. This lack of realism in British approach to Kabul Amir may be accounted for by alternative schemes, more ambitious in their scope, which were then being hatched in Simla where Auckland was at that time. While Burnes was in Kabul, a Russian agent Vickovitch also reached there and made profuse promises of support to Dost Muhammad. It was believed by the British that the Amir had entered into an alliance with Russia though no definite proof was available, and the agent was later disowned by the Czar's government. But there was change in the attitude of Dost Muhammad and that afforded a handle to Auckland to plan his ruin. The first Afghan war had its genesis in this condition of mutual suspicion.

The Government of India had been keenly interested in the developments in Central Asia and was eager to participate in commerce in that region. Afghanistan was the emporium of trade without control over which it was difficult to gain entrance into the territories of Central Asia. Bentinck had shown his inclination to despatch a mission to Kabul, but it could not materialise before Burnes's visit in the time of



Auckland, whose behaviour was scarcely appropriate for ends sought. British minister Palmerston was frankly expansionist in his policies which were influenced profoundly by his anti-Russian views, and the Governor-General in Calcutta blindly towed his line. Their intervention in Herat and the pressure exercised on the Shah of Iran were the consequence of their policy to enjoy without a rival the fruits of Asian commerce. The Russians were conscious of this ambition of their competitor and, as quoted by Tytler, made reference in one of their despatches "to the indefatigable activity displayed by English travellers to spread disquiet among the people of Central Asia, and to carry agitation even into the heart of the countries bordering on our frontier whilst on our part we ask nothing but to be admitted to partake in fair competition the commercial advantages of Asia. English industry, exclusive and jealous, would deprive us entirely of the benefits which it pretends to reap alone ; and would cause, if it could, the produce of our manufacturers to disappear from all the markets of Central Asia". This expression of injured innocence was merely the outcome of diplomatic defeat suffered in Herat, for otherwise neither the Czarist empire nor the British were prepared to admit any other power to share the profits of commerce in Asia; and they never cared about the feelings or interests of the smaller weak states of Asia. After the release of Herat from the clutches of Russia, British design naturally was to exercise full control over Afghanistan and therefrom probe into the regions beyond for commercial gains, which necessarily involved political domination. Auckland, with the concurrence of the Government of England, planned to have a friendly but docile ruler in Kabul and Kandahar, and all his moves were directed to this purpose.

Natural course was to "support and subsidize" Dost Muhammad who was the best man and in actual possession of Afghanistan. But Auckland had other views, and beset as he was with "extraordinary" difficulties, and surrounded by immature advisers, straight path did not appeal to him. In the summer of 1838, the fate of Herat was still undecided and the British Government had not yet delivered ultimatum to the Shah of Iran that "if this project be persevered in, the friendly relations which upto this time have happily subsisted bet-

ween Great Britain and Persia must necessarily cease." Burne's mission to Kabul had yielded no results and the possibility was that the Amir might turn to Russia for support. Internal situation in India also was not satisfactory to British interests. In this predicament Auckland was led to look upon "closer alliance with Ranjit Singh" as an element of stability which might "have a steadying effect" on the developments in India. And Macnaghten, his chief confidant, was all in favour of subordinating British policy to that of Ranjit Singh. Dost Muhammad demanded the price of Peshawar for friendship with Great Britain, but the latter could ill afford to displease the Sikh ruler. Also at that time Ranjit Singh was in treaty relations with Shah Shuja, the exiled Afghan chief, whose ill-fated venture in 1834 had received Sikh support. According to Tytler, "To Lord Auckland, brooding over the whole business in May 1838, his policy may well have seemed clear if distasteful. The common enemy was Dost Muhammad, the objective his removal and replacement by Shah Shuja" who might succeed in regaining the allegiance of his people. This course appeared easy to the expansionist and victorious British power. Auckland favoured "the advance of Ranjit Singh's armies upon Kabul, under counsel and restriction, and as subsidiary to his advance to organise an expedition headed by Shah Shuja for which the British would supply the money, would appoint an accredited agent to accompany the Shah's camp, and would furnish a certain number of British officers to direct the movement of the Shah's Army". This is what Auckland contemplated at the moment and for this he had approval from London, though his employers had suggested one more effort being made "to gain over Dost Muhammad and his brothers". Meanwhile Ranjit Singh was not prepared to risk an invasion of Afghanistan where its people were "formidable among the fastnesses of their own country" and bitterly resented "foreign domination." Without effective British intervention, therefore, the project of substituting a subordinate friendly ruler in Kabul in place of proud virile Dost Muhammad, might have miscarried. Therefore Macnaghten was sent to Lahore where the Tripartite Treaty was signed between Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja in July, which was guaranteed by the British who

became a party to it. By this agreement Shah Shuja was to march on Kandahar with his army financed by the British accompanied by some of their officers, while a Sikh army, under his son Timur Shah was to move upon Kabul by way of Peshawar. Sykes has pointed out that the Maharaja was not enthusiastic about this venture for, if successful, it would enhance British power "to his own detriment". However, the Tripartite Treaty had been agreed upon and Auckland had irrevocably committed the British to the support of a discredited Afghan prince to the exclusion of a strong and popular ruler.

There was fast movement on the stage of happenings and, by August, Auckland had decided to adopt a primary role in the invasion of Afghanistan, for he was not certain of the part which Ranjit Singh would take in this adventure. The Governor-General justified his action by the plea "that the measure could not be trusted mainly to the support of the Sikh ruler and army without imminent hazard of failure, and of serious detriment to the reputation of the British name among the Afghan people". Reasons have been sought for this sudden change in the role of the British. Perhaps Tytler is nearest to logic in his assessment that "the final decision to use a British force to remove one Afghan ruler and replace him by another was a logical and indeed inevitable decision. Once it had been decreed that Dost Muhammad must go, the only people capable of carrying out the decision were the British". Even if the fact of lukewarmness of the Sikh ruler and his incapacity to achieve the main object might be discounted, the British could ill-afford to admit of a partner in the ultimate exploitation of the resources of Afghanistan which was their principal purpose. In the Simla Manifesto, published on 1 October 1838, the Government of India explained "the reasons which have led to this important measure", the decision to use British-Indian army. And in this exposition primary place has been given to "the extension of commerce, and to gain for the British nation in Central Asia that legitimate influence which an interchange of benefits would naturally produce". After referring to Burne's Mission directed to the purpose of inviting "the aid of the defacto ruler of Afghanistan to the measures necessary for giving full effect" to that object, mention was made of the

possibility of armed conflict between Dost Muhammad and Ranjit Singh, and in that context it was specifically stated that "it was to be feared that the flames of war being once kindled in the very regions into which we were endeavouring to extend our commerce, the peaceful and beneficial purposes of the British Government would be altogether frustrated". Could Auckland allow the Sikhs to place Shah Shuja on the throne of Kabul and deprive the British of these benefits; and the decision to send the Indian army was a logical sequence. To justify his policy Auckland indulged in falsehood, accusing Dost Muhammad of hostile action. He charged the Amir with "urging the most unreasonable pretensions" and avowing "schemes of aggrandisement and ambition injurious to the security and peace of the frontiers of India" for the prosecution of which "he openly threatened ..... to call in every foreign aid which he could command" and "gave his undisguised support to the Persian designs in Afghanistan". The Governor-General therefore claimed that owing to the "hostile policy" of Dost Muhammad "so long as Kabul remained under his government, we could never hope that the tranquillity of our neighbourhood would be secured, or that the interests of our Indian Empire would be preserved". Referring to the Iranian invasion of Herat and collusion of Kandahar chiefs with the aggressor, Auckland stressed "the importance of taking immediate measures for arresting the rapid progress of foreign intrigue and aggression towards our own frontiers". For this purpose the reinstatement of Shah Shuja was contemplated because "the welfare of our possessions in the East requires that we should have on our western frontier an ally who is interested in resisting aggression, and establishing tranquillity, in place of the chiefs ranging themselves in subservience to a hostile power, and seeking to promote schemes of conquests and aggrandisement". By thus weaving a tissue of lies and exaggerations did Auckland justify aggressive war in Afghanistan directed to the purpose of excluding Dost Muhammad and replacing him by Shah Shuja who would function as a subsidiary prince and further British Central Asian designs. Before the Manifesto was issued, however, Persian threat to Herat had disappeared and an important base for opposing Dost Muhammad had melted away. Yet the Governor-General did not

renounce his policy but carried it out with greater enthusiasm as the danger of external aid to the Amir had been eliminated. There was therefore little justification for the war which was wholly aggressive in character as its object was, as announced by Auckland, "the substitution of a friendly for a hostile power in the eastern provinces of Afghanistan."

The army assembled at Ferozpur from where it marched through Sind and Kalat territories to Kandahar by way of Bolan Pass. This march led to the blatantly unjust pressure on the Amirs of Sind compelling them to pay tribute and allow the British army to traverse their territories against previous treaties. Also Khan of Kalat had to agree to a treaty agreeing to procure supplies in exchange for a subsidy. Shah Shuja entered Kandahar on April 25, 1839, with the British army which had left Ferozpur in early December 1838. Another contingent under Timur Shah accompanied by Wade had left Lahore in January 1839, and recruiting troops at Peshawar, crossed the Khaibar Pass in June. Resistance by Akbar Khan, son of Dost Muhammad, was unavailing and the army moved on to Kabul. Meanwhile the main army had stormed the strong fort Ghazni, beyond which the way to Kabul was now open. Dost Muhammad found himself in a precarious situation, surrounded on all sides by hostile troops and "treachery and dissension". He decided to quit with a few followers, and before the pursuit party could catch up with him he had crossed the frontier to the north over the Bamian range of the Hindukush and sought assylum with the Amir of Bukhara. Shah Shuja with his British supporters entered Kabul on 6 August, and thus the first phase of the war was over with resounding success of the British-Indian arms, and Auckland's adventurous policy had met with success, though momentary. The surrender of Dost Muhammad a little later and his being sent to Calcutta to live as a British stipendary was the crowning event of this phase which strengthened the presumption that Shah Shuja's reign would endure and ensure the full realisation of British objects. But the cold reception of the new Amir by the populace, presence of hovering bands of Afghans sympathetic to the exiled Amir and the uncertain attitude of the tribes were ominous signs which soon erupted into a major conflagration largely fanned by the behaviour of

the English conquerors and their conduct in administering the country.

Auckland had proclaimed earlier that the British army would return to India when Shuja had been restored, and it would have been a wise policy to adhere to this declaration. But perhaps the will to retire was not there and the statement lacked honesty. Macnaghten, the political adviser of the new Amir, did not wish to leave Shuja uncontrolled and both dictated as well as executed the policies of the Kabul government. His measures proved naturally offensive to the freedom-loving Afghans who could brook no defiance of their traditional customs and tribal rights. Imposition of taxes, stoppage of promised subsidies to the Ghilzai and other tribes, and the unmasked presence of British army and civilian personnel in their midst alarmed the people who were then simmering with discontent. Economic grievances further aggravated their resentment. Prices of grain and other necessities had risen in Kabul as all supplies were cornered for the use of British troops. There were also rumours of loss of honour of Afghan women who were in demand by British soldiers. Many Englishmen lived in the city houses thus exhibiting a constant proof of the defeat and humiliation of the Afghans. Shah Shuja was also not happy with the secondary and subordinate position which he occupied in his own government. Macnaghten's wish to act as a super-ruler was bound to create enmity all around. It is not surprising, therefore, that a strong anti-British sentiment was gathering momentum in the capital and the towns and tribal areas of Afghanistan. Right course in this situation was to leave Shuja to himself and retire wholly to India, but Auckland, under Macnaghten's advice, decided to maintain the semblance of military presence after depleting its strength because of financial reasons. The remaining army was dispersed in Kandahar, Ghazni, Kabul and many other places which made its hold all the weaker. Meanwhile Shuja was growing unpopular. The Secret Committee in London, at the close of 1840, had written to Auckland that "for many years to come the restored monarchy will have need of a British force, in order to maintain peace in its own territory, and prevent aggression from without. We must add that to accomplish this by a small force, or by the mere influence of British Residents,

will, in our opinion, be most unwise and frivolous, and that we should prefer the entire abandonment of the country and a frank confession of complete failure, to any such policy". This wise counsel however was ignored because of the optimistic assessment of Macnaghten that "all was well", even while the Ghilzais were in revolt in the spring of 1841. Events thereafter moved fast. Sale's march to Jalalabad to keep the line of retreat safe was opposed by the Afghans, but he reached the place suffering some losses. Meanwhile the position in Kabul had deteriorated. On November 2, Burnes's house in the city was raided and he was killed with his brother and the escort. But no decided action was taken. Meanwhile news of murders and rich loot had "spread far and wide, thousands of armed Afghans hastened from every direction" to Kabul. Akbar Khan, with many important chiefs, was hovering around and making the position of the British desperate, and compelled them to seek terms for their retreat to India. Macnaghten negotiated a settlement with Akbar Khan on December 11, 1841, agreeing to leave Kabul in three days on the promise by the latter of safety and necessary supplies for their survival. But the British Resident, as Sykes writes, "was delaying the execution of the treaty, hoping to save the situation by creating dissension among the chiefs". Retribution awaited him for this treachery and he was killed by Akbar Khan for the envoy had deceived him. Thereafter the British were forced to march back, leaving hostages behind, and on the way they suffered from intense cold, starvation and constant firing by Afghans. So that before the column could reach Jalalabad it was destroyed except for one sole survivor, Dr. Brydon, to recount the tale of their misery and disaster to his compatriots at Jalalabad. Thus ended the second stage of the Afghan war which brought down the prestige of the British and encouraged elements hostile to them in India.

Meanwhile the Liberal government in England had decided to recall Auckland and send Ellenborough to take his place. It was also not committed to the aggressive policies of its predecessor. The new Governor-General therefore decided to withdraw wholly from Afghanistan, where even after the January disaster many regiments of British Indian troops had remained in Kandahar, Jalalabad and some other places and a force

under General Pollock had reached Peshawar and another was in Kalat. Yet on March 15, 1842, the the Governor-General decreed that, "Faced by the universal hostility of the Afghan people, which had assumed a religious as well as a national character, it was clear that to recover Afghanistan, if it were possible, would constitute a source of weakness rather than of strength in case of an invasion from the west, and that the ground upon which the present policy rested had ceased to exist". Therefore in consonance entirely with "military considerations" steps should be taken to quit Afghanistan with due regard "to the re-establishment of our military reputation by the infliction of some signal and decisive blow upon the Afghans, which may make it appear to them, our own subjects and to our allies, that we have the power of inflicting punishment upon those who commit atrocities and violate their faith". The withdrawal was to be a frank admission of the error to imagine that the new ruler had the support of the nation. British army moved from two directions converging upon Kabul, the market place of which was burnt and the city plundered indiscriminately. This act of vandalism being performed, the British left Afghanistan and restored Dost Muhammad to his kingdom. Thus ended the unwise adventure of ruling the Afghans by placing a subordinate, subsidized prince at their head. The first attempt to defend India on the Hindukush and thereby give it a scientific frontier had ended in disaster.

The consequence of this unnecessary and expensive war was suspicion about the motives and intentions of the British in Kabul and lack of faith and fear of fanaticism of the Afghans in Calcutta. The restored Amir also could not reconcile himself to a state of friendliness with his enemy who had unjustly hurled war on him and had been the cause of his humiliation. For a decade therefore a feeling of hostility persisted on either side, prompting Dost Muhammad to align with the Sikhs, and under pressure from his people, to join them in their fight with the British in 1849. His brief occupation of Peshawar and participation in the battle of Gujrat proved costly adventures as he lost both. Thereafter he was content to nurse his grievance in sullen isolation and devote his energies to the consolidation of his kingdom by annexing Kandahar and Herat.



to his dominion. The British also had a bitter lesson and thought it wiser to leave the Afghans to themselves for the time being, and concentrated their energies on extending their boundaries upto the hills in the north-west by annexing Sind and Panjab to their empire. The dream of positioning the defence of India on the line of Hindukush had for the moment yielded to the realities of the situation and the Indus was considered as a more manageable line. The Afghan war had originated in the fear of Russian aggression in Central Asia, both territorial and economic. In the fifties of the last century this danger revived prompting fresh British interest in the politics of the region. Persian threat to Herat earlier had been responsible for their interference in Afghanistan. Once again the Shah of Iran was tempted to regain influence there when its Chief offered to become his vassal. The British could not remain indifferent and compelled the Shah in 1853 to engage "not to send troops on any account to the territory of Herat, excepting when troops from without attack the place". But to the Shah such a restraint was unpalatable and he lent his ears to Russian overtures seeking his participation in the Russo-Turkish conflict, which was soon to develop into the war, commonly known as Crimean War. The undependable posture of Iran and open hostility of Russia compelled the Government of India to rely on Afghanistan as a counterpoise so as to convert it, as Dalhousie wrote, into "an effectual barrier against Russian aggression, or which would encourage and induce the Afghan tribes to make common cause with us against an enemy, whose success would be fatal to the common interests of both Afghan and British power". The Amir was also concerned at the threatening attitude of Persia which made no secret of her desire to occupy Herat and Kandahar and thus menace the security of Kabul, and thus expanding the influence of Russia beyond the Syr Darya in Central Asia, and he was veering round to his erstwhile enemy. In this conjuncture of mutual interest, the Treaty of 1855 was concluded between the Afghans and the British by which the two pledged "perpetual peace and friendship" and the Amir besides agreed to an additional stipulation to be the friend of the friends of the East India Company and the enemy of its enemies. It was a 'general, vague, limited and one-sided,

agreement'; however, it opened diplomatic relations between the two powers and terminated the spell of sullen quiescence and antagonistic confrontation.

This friendliness was further strengthened when in 1856 the Persians sent another expedition against Herat which met with support from one of the factions there, and city was brought under foreign occupation. This new development in the most sensitive area disturbed the equanimity both of Dost Muhammad and the British Government. Immediate action was taken to clear Herat of the Persians and restore its independence. On the one hand, the Amir was offered effective support, by a fresh treaty signed in January 1857 by which a subsidy of rupees one lac per month was to be given to him for the duration of the war in which he was to engage with the Persians. on the condition that this "money was to be spent on his army under the supervision of British officers". Arms and ammunition were also supplied to him. At the same time on the other hand, the British exerted pressure on the Shah to force him to withdraw from Herat by occupying the island of Kharak and the town of Bushire on the Persian Gulf. A force also landed at Mohmara and defeated the Persian army. The Shah sued for peace and the Treaty of Paris was signed by which he agreed "to relinquish all claims of sovereignty over the territory and city of Herat and the countries of Afghanistan; ..... to abstain hereafter from all interference with the internal affairs of Afghanistan. . . . In case of differences arising between the Governments of Persia and the countries of Herat and Afghanistan the Persian Government engages to refer them for adjustment to the friendly office of the British Government, and not to take up arms unless those friendly offices fail of effect". Thus ended the danger from Iran to an area of immense strategic significance for the defence of India, and when Herat was conquered by Dost Muhammad in 1863, just before his death, the whole of Afghanistan was united under the rule of Kabul where a strong and friendly ruler had established his undisputed sway. The Amir had exhibited his amity by abstaining from exploiting the difficulties of the British during the Revolt of 1857 and stood as a friendly barrier against foreign encroachments from the north-west.

Meanwhile the Russians were busy extending their empire in Central Asia and were rapidly covering on the river Oxus which divided Afghanistan from the states of Central Asia. One explanation for this eastern move might be the setback in the Balkans which had put a stop to expansion westward into Europe and ended all prospects of unhindered outlet to the Mediterranean. The other advanced by a Russian historian, Terentyef, is "sheer necessity which forced us to plant settlements on the furthestmost limits of our possessions to check incursions of the nomad tribes on the eastern frontiers", he writes "In this context with the historical necessity of a perpetual advance is contained the whole interest of our Central Asian movement". Early employment of armed force came about in the Caucasian region which was ultimately directed against the Iranian kingdom. But strong resistance by the Georgians and the rivalry with England delayed execution of that project and led the Czar's government to concentrate on the conquest of Central Asian states of Khiva, Khokand, Bukhara and Kashgar in the extreme east and Turkoman country in the west. The west steppes of Siberia had been brought under Russian sway earlier and then their attention was turned to the conquest of Khiva and Khokand. because the Kirghiz tribal hordes were making inroads into Siberian territory. The pretence of search for natural boundaries, which were provided by rivers and mountains, was adopted but the real motive was territorial sovereignty and economic advantage accruing from commerce with these lands. Three bases were formed for the advance. The first of these was the mouth of river Syr Darya on the Aral Sea, where a chain of forts was built with Orenburg as the main centre. Kirghiz roads were stopped but the occupation of this strategic area alarmed the rulers of Khiva. Bukhara and Khokand who are alleged to have incited the tribes to create trouble for the Russians. In 1839 an unsuccessful invasion of Khiva was conducted, and for many years, beyond occupying the fort of AK Masjid, no further advance was made by the Russians. But their control over more than two hundred miles of the lower course of the Syr Darya alarmed the ruler of Khokand, who, it is alleged, encouraged tribal raids and risings against the Russians; and thereby afforded

justification for their expansion farther east. For this purpose the second base of Samapalatinsk was utilised; so that moving westwards from Fort Vernoe and operating a pincer movement from the other direction as well, a number of important towns of Khokand were captured by the Russians including Chamkand in 1864. Next came the turn of Tashkand which was taken in 1865 while Khokand fell to them next year. The conquest of these important cities sealed the fate of Khokand and enabled the Russians to control the entire Syr Darya line. In 1867 a treaty of commerce was made with the Khan allowing preferential treatment to Russian trade. Next year by a treaty that kingdom, in its attenuated size, was converted into a mere subsidiary vassal of the Russian empire, and proved a stepping stone for further conquests in Central Asia. The next victim was the state of Bukhara, whose Amir ceded Samarkand and the rich valley of Farghana, the granary of Central Asia, and resigned himself to the status of a feudatory. Next came the turn of Khiva whose ruler was defeated in 1873 and made into a vassal of the Czar after ceding a large tract of his kingdom to the victors. With the conquest of the three major states of Central Asia, Russia's predominance in the region was fully assured and afforded a powerful base for probing eastward into the territories of Zungaria and Kashgaria which recognised Chinese suzerainty, and westward to bring the freedom-loving Turkoman under Russian sway and approach the strategic town of Herat on the north-west frontier of Afghanistan. By the treaties signed with the Khans, Russia was assured of economic dominance in Central Asia and securing commercial monopoly there. By these measures not only the prospects of the British acquiring an economic foothold in Central Asia were blighted, but Russian presence there augured ill for their commerce even in Kashgar and Afghanistan.

The development of Russian territory and political influence enveloping the whole of Central Asia, in the few years after the Crimean War, so close to Afghanistan touching its borders posed a threat to the integrity and independence of that state and menaced the security of the British empire in India. The sudden projection of Russian empire upto the river Oxus and the extension of the pincer arm westwards towards the

Turkoman territories and eastwards into Kashgar and Ili, not unduly alarmed the Afghan Amir and made the British apprehensive of the security of their empire and the prospects of commerce in Central Asia. Russian ambitions embraced the Chinese empire also which was then being gradually enwrapped within their economic and territorial designs. The fear, which was not unreal, of complete exclusion from commercial participation in this huge land block, led to Russophobia in England which was reflected in the policies of the Government of India. But till 1875, 'the consciousness of danger had not been acute' and therefore a policy of peaceful action was pursued with a view to eliminating conflict with Russia 'by creating a belt of neutral territory between the two empires'. In the execution of this policy 'both strategy and economic motives' demanded close interest in the affairs of Afghanistan, its external relations and the stability of its government. In the early stages, this interest assumed the aspect of non-interference and non-involvement in its internal affairs and strengthening the bonds of mutual friendship by rendering occasional aid to the Amir to enforce his sway over his country and preserve the unity of the state from foreign encroachments. An essential element of Indo-British policy, thus, was to prevent Russian influence being established in Afghanistan and to wean away the Amir from any desire to align himself with Russia or Persia. Lawrence was the architect of this policy which was pursued by his two successors and the Liberal Government in England.

The treaties of 1855 and 1857 had demonstrated the friendliness of Dost Muhammad who remained staunch in observing his engagements with the British. His death in 1863 brought his son Sher Ali to the throne, but his claims were contested by his two elder brothers which led to the commencement of a fratricidal war lasting over five years. In this context the Government of India was called upon to determine its policy towards Kabul, and simultaneously Sir John Lawrence came as the Governor-General of India. He had sponsored the treaty of 1855 and was affected in his views by two factors, the tragic events of the Afghan War and the advice of the late Amir to abstain from interference in the internal disputes of his country. Therefore he advocated the principle of non-inter-

vention which has been derisively termed 'Masterly Inactivity' by his critics. The basis of his policy, however, was friendship with the actual ruler of the country without involving India in any commitments, absolute non-interference in the internal affairs of the state and positive embargo on the entry of any Englishman on Afghan soil. Such a policy harmonised with his views on the strategic line of defence for India and clear appreciation of the character and remoteness of Russian danger. Sher Ali was recognised as defacto ruler by him, and that prince managed to maintain a precarious hold on the throne for three years, despite attacks by his brothers, Afzal and Azim. In 1866 Sher Ali was driven out of Kabul but kept Herat in his possession. Lawrence, true to his policy, offered defacto recognition to Afzal in Kabul and Sher Ali in Herat, and defined his policy as of "maintaining an attitude of strict neutrality leaving the Afghans to choose their own rulers, and are prepared to accept with amity whatever chief may finally establish his power in the country". He further postulated "we will not interfere in the struggle, that we will not aid either party, that we will leave Afghans to settle their own quarrels and that we are willing to be on terms of amity and goodwill with the nation and with the rulers defacto". And as princes changed on the throne for some time he extended recognition to each of them till in 1868 Sher Ali defeated opposition and had full control on the country. At that time Lawrence gave him support in money and arms which stabilised his position. This attitude of Lawrence during the course of civil war in Afghanistan has been denounced by a group of military strategists and politicians who wished to exploit the internal differences and weakness of the country to bring it into the orbit of British suzerainty and posit India's defence on the Hindukush and the river Oxus. As Lawrence was not prepared for such a course his policy was ridiculed and he was held responsible for the growing aggressiveness of Russia. But Lawrence was clear that his policy of hands-off the internal disputes of Afghanistan was only relative and was conditioned by the contesting parties fighting their battles unaided by any foreign power and England coming to some settlement with Russia about their mutual claims in Central Asia. In case any prince looked to Persia or Russia for help, Lawrence

would not remain pacific but would render open assistance to the party in power at Kabul. It may be emphasised that 'his neutrality had reference only to the contest between the parties in Afghanistan and did not by any means extend to a disinterested observation of the foreign influence, whether of Persia or Russia, being established in the country. The independence of Afghanistan and her rigid adherence to the terms of friendship with the Government of India were the fundamentals of his policy. It was fortunate for Lawrence that neither any foreign power intervened nor the country was divided, but emerged as a united state under Sher Ali.

Lawrence remained true to his policy of non-involvement in the affairs of his neighbours. When the Khan of Khokand sought his help to strengthen his army, he declined to render him aid on the ground of remoteness of the territories "to admit of British interference". The same attitude was adopted towards Bukhara, Khiva or Kashgar as the Viceroy saw "no objection to relations of amity between Russia and Khokand" and was not "apprehensive of Russian treaty with Bukhara". His entire attention was concentrated on Afghanistan where he was averse to any interference. But the growing influence of Russia in Central Asia had "caused an amount of uneasiness in England and India" which was aggravated by the fall of Tashkand and Samarkand to Russian arms. Many writers, both civil and military, were led into speculation about the possible direction of Russian advance and grave apprehension was expressed about the security of India. An important review of the situation was that by Sir Henry Rawlinson who advocated "internal interference in Afghanistan" as he considered "implication of Russia in Afghan affairs is no longer a matter of speculation". He discounted the possibility of Russian invasion of India through Kabul, but presence of its military forces on the Oxus or "dominant political influence in Afghanistan" would pose strong danger to British empire in India. In his view Herat was the key to India and must be protected from falling into Russian hands. For that purpose Rawlinson recommended substitution of the non-intervention policy by an active subsidization of Sher Ali, strengthening him at Kabul, improvement of communications with the Afghan frontier, involving stationing

of British officers there and establishment of a fortified out-work at Quetta. His suggestions led to the adumbration of the policy of scientific frontier for India which was to be laid on the Herat-Hindukush line, and the substitution of the policy of "masterly inactivity by one more active, interfering and expansive so as to bring Afghanistan within the orbit of British influence". Lawrence and his Council were wholly opposed to those views and vehemently objected to occupation of Quetta, Kandahar or Herat as being militarily unsound. To him the "proper course is not to advance our troops beyond our present borders; not to send British officers into the different states of Central Asia". He did not countenance stationing of a British agent in Kabul, and believed that friendly understanding with Russia in respect of the position of Afghanistan was both practicable and essential. His policy was summed up by Lawrence in these words: "While strictly refusing to enter into anything like defensive alliance with the Ameer of Kabul, I think it should be carefully explained to him that we are interested in the security of his dominions from foreign invasion; and that provided he remains strictly faithful to his engagements, we are prepared to support his independence. But that the manner of doing so must rest with ourselves". He was desirous of meeting Sher Ali, the Amir, and by personal contact to cement the bonds of friendship. Therefore, he invited the Amir to visit India, but he left the country before this meeting could materialise. It was left to his successor Mayo to meet the Amir at Ambala in 1869 and contract an abiding personal amity with him. Mayo was a faithful adherent of Lawrence's policy and reiterated non-interference in the affairs of Afghanistan. The Amir, however, was growing alarmed by the expansion of Russian empire towards his frontiers and sought definite and formal commitments by the Government of India for help to ward off the Russian trouble. He also desired promise of a permanent subsidy and British recognition for the succession of his favourite son Abdulla Jan to the Kabul throne on his death. But Mayo was prevented from making any specific promises because the policy of non-intervention held sway at the moment and to it he was also wedded. The Amir was assured of non-interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and



the non-presence of British officers in his kingdom. The Amir was also assured that the British Government "will view with severe displeasure any attempt on the part of your rivals to disturb your position as ruler of Kabul and rekindle civil war" and that "it will endeavour to strengthen his government". The Amir in the words of Mayo was offered only "warm countenance and support, discouragement of his rivals, such material assistance as we may deem absolutely necessary for his immediate wants, constant and friendly communication through the commissioner of Peshawar and a native agent at Kabul; he on his part, undertaking to do all he can to maintain peace on our frontier and comply with all wishes in matters of trade". Mere sentiments and no substance.

Even these vague and indefinite promises of support failed to find favour with the Government in England, because they did not wish to limit their discretion "as to the occasions on which and as to all the circumstances under which assistance should be given or withheld". They desired the Amir to promote British commerce and to abide by the friendship of India, but were not prepared to pay the price for it. They wanted his friendship against future danger from Russia but were not ready to enter into any pact with him for the purpose. Nevertheless, despite reluctance to enter into treaty relations the Government of India was "prepared . . . to give all the moral support in our power, and that in addition, we were willing to assist him with money, arms, ammunition, native artificers, and in other ways, whenever we deemed it possible or desirable to do so". Sher Ali went back from Ambala with confidence of support and assurance that no British officers would be sent to his country, and that was adequate at the moment for his internal security. The British, on their side, also commenced negotiations with Russia to define the boundaries of Afghanistan and to obtain assurance from the Czar that Afghanistan was outside his sphere of influence. The policy of the Government of India was communicated to the Russian government that "the complete independence of Afghanistan is so important to the interests of British India that the Government of India could not look upon an attack upon Afghanistan with indifference. So long as the Amir

continues to act in accordance with our advice in his relations with his neighbours, he would naturally look for material assistance from us, and circumstances might occur under which we should consider it incumbent to render him such assistance''. In 1872 the Russian government agreed to the northern boundary of Afghanistan and recognised that state as falling within the sphere of British influence. With this pact the Government of India grew indifferent to the possible Russian menace to its friend and neighbour and failed to appreciate Amir's apprehensions which were roused by the growing Russian influence so close to his frontier and their expansive pose on his north-western frontier towards Merv and finally Herat. In this difference in the attitude of the two friends towards Russian designs may be traced the increasing coolness between Sher Ali and Northbrook which was further thickened by the Viceroy's policy in matters like Seistan boundary, interference on behalf of Yakub Khan, the Amir's son, reluctance to recognize Abdulla Jan and suggestion to despatch British officers into that country.

During the discussions with Russia about Afghanistan boundaries the question of maintaining a zone of buffer states between the two empires cropped up. The Government of India was not prepared for the neutralisation of Afghanistan and therefore the proposal could not be pursued. However, at that time, it clearly outlined its policy towards the border states. It was then stated: "we should establish with our frontier states of Kalat, Afghanistan, Nepal and Burma, and possibly at some future day with Yarkand, intimate relations of friendship; we should make them feel that, though we are all powerful, we have no wish to encroach on their authority, but on the contrary, that our earnest desire is to support their power and maintain nationality; and that if severe necessity arises, we might assist them with money, arms and even perhaps, in certain circumstances, with men. We could thus create in these states outworks of our Empire, and by assuring them that the days of annexation are passed, make them practically feel that they have everything to gain and nothing to lose by endeavouring to deserve our favour and support''. Such a position involved autonomy of the states but control over their foreign relations and defence

against external attack and internal disintegration. It was in this context that Northbrook had defined India's policy towards Afghanistan, as mentioned earlier. Success of such a policy depended on conviction of the sincerity of the British on the one hand and the absence of serious external threat on the other. But the situation in early seventies of the last century was not propitious to peaceful pursuit of this attitude. Russian successes beyond the Oxus had brought one independent state after another under their sway; the latest being the conquest of Khiva in 1873. Also, there was steady advance into the Turkoman country from the port of Krasnovodsk on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea, and modern means of communication were being developed within the Russian zone, which were naturally to engender feelings of alarm in Kabul. In these circumstances, it was difficult for Sher Ali to be content with mere expressions of sympathy, and he desired more specific assurances of support in the event of Russian aggression. His equanimity was also disturbed by the continuous flow of letters from Kauffman, the Viceroy of Russian Turkestan, affirming friendliness with the Kabul Amir. Sher Ali sent his minister Nur Mohammad Shah to Simla in June 1873 to know from Northbrook "exactly where he stood with the British in connexion with the constant advance of Russia". He wanted to know whether the British would help him in the eventuality of Russian invasion with money and arms. The Governor-General was prepared to convince the Amir of British good intentions by communicating to him the substance of the policy which they had affirmed in correspondence with Russian government, that they would "not look upon an attack on Afghanistan with indifference"; and that if the Amir abided by their advice in his external relations, under certain circumstances assistance in arms, money and even men might be extended to him. The British Government under Lawrence's influence, however, were not prepared to dispel the vagueness of their relationship. Northbrook cabled on 20 July 1873: "Amir of Kabul alarmed at Russian progress; dissatisfied with general assurances, and anxious to know definitely how far he may rely on our help if invaded. I propose to assure him that if he unreservedly accepts and acts on our advice in all external relations, we will help him with money, arms

and troops, if necessary to repel unprovoked aggression. We to be the judge of the necessity". To this the Secretary of State replied "that we do not at all share his alarm, and consider there is no cause for it. But you may assure him we shall maintain our settled policy in Afghanistan, if he abides by our advice in external affairs". The Amir could no longer be deluded by these vaguenesses, and grew sullen in his attitude towards the British. The Seistan Award, silence regarding Abdulla Jan's nomination as heir-apparent, and Viceroy's intercession on behalf of Yakub Khan, further heightened his resentment. It is believed by Sykes and others that the Amir definitely inclined towards Russia and responded to Kauffmann's overtures. But Sher Ali was ever suspicious of Russian aggressiveness and desired friendship with India.

But during discussions at Simla and in subsequent letters of the Amir and the Viceroy, the differences between the two governments seem to have been very narrow, and more of a subjective character than real. The Amir had no faith in Russian assurances to respect the integrity of his country and desired definite commitments of effective support in the event of Russian invasion, however mediate it might be. His demand was that Indian assistance "should be in the form of a promise to assist that country with money and arms according to the circumstances of the case, in the event of invasion, and if the Amir should be unable to cope single-handed with an invader and should prefer a request for troops, the British Government should promise to despatch troops to his aid and withdraw them when the necessity for their employment is over". The Viceroy's reply was vague in its verbosity but in its substance it practically complied with the Amir's requirements. He demanded that the Amir should refer the question of threatened aggression to the British Government "who would endeavour by negotiation and by every means in their power to settle the matter and avert hostilities". If such endeavours "proved fruitless" then the "British Government are prepared to assure the Amir that they will afford him assistance in the shape of arms money, and will also in case of necessity aid him with troops". But this assurance was hedged in by the set phrase of their being the judge of the necessity or the occasion for such aid. The Amir wanted the British

to specifically mention "the contingency of aggression by Russia", which the Viceroy could not for diplomatic reasons agree to. The Amir wanted help long before the actual aggression might arise so that preparations to meet it might be there; but the Government of India did not undertake to give such an assurance, though immediate help in arms and money was rendered. To an objective observer there appears to be little difference in the content of aid sought and proffered. It was extremely subjective, and the expression in Viceroy's letter, that "To this settlement the British Government are a party and they are consequently even more interested than before in the maintenance of the integrity of Your Highness's forntier", should have set at rest the misgivings of the Amir. At Simla, it appears, "a solemn and far-reaching assurance of help had been given" which should have demolished his fears of insecurity. If he was happy with the declarations of Mayo and Lawrence, by which he swore, it is surprising that he did not feel content with more concrete promise made at Simla. The cause of his uneasiness lay in the circumstances at the moment arising out of the Russian advance towards his frontier and the attitude of Northbrook, particularly the demand for passage to British travellers through his country.

With the coming of Conservative Party to power, there was a radical change in the nature of British foreign and imperial policy. There was greater awareness of the growing Russian imperialism in Asia, and the danger was appreciated to British naval supremacy in the Mediterranean, which had, with the opening of the Suez Canal, turned into the main channel of communication with their empire in the east, by Russian ambitions to control Turkey and thereby dominate the Bosphorus and Dardennelles opening. Russian successes in Central Asia were then believed to pose active menace to British hold over India. And in that context Forward Policy advocated by Rawlinson and others a few years earlier had a peculiar appeal to the British Cabinet. This school of strategists felt that the natural line of defence for India was the Hindukush-Oxus region which was considered to be its Scientific Frontier. Analysing the effects of Russian advance in Central Asia, Rawlinson had come to the conclusion that "it would seem to be our bounden duty to step forward and forestall" Russia

in Kabul. A dominant position there was its necessary sequel, and he emphasised it by asserting "interference in Afghanistan has now become a duty" in the interest of peace and commerce. He was emphatic about the strategic significance of Herat, to prevent whose falling into Russian hands be recommended anticipatory action there, including occupation of Quetta to form a base. These views had influenced the thinking of Disraeli's Cabinet which sought independence of action in Central Asia, both in the interest of Indian-security as well as their Balkan policy. Russian designs on Merv, leading finally to Herat, had to be counteracted by forming a ring of dependent, willingly subordinate states round the Russian empire. Closer approach to Yarkand-Kashgar, the desire to exploit the treaty with the Khan of Kalat for stationing British troops in Quetta, the eagerness to render assistance to the Merv Turkomans and the keenness for more intimate relations with Afghanistan involving the posting of British agents on the Afghan frontier at Herat, Maimna and Balkh, were all adopted as measures of new imperialism to hold back their rival Russia in its onward march in Asia and the Balkans. In his letter of 22 June 1877 to the Queen, quoted by Sykes, Disraeli had outlined the steps to be taken in Asia, if Russia occupied Constantinople. He wrote, "Russia must be attacked from Asia, that troops should be sent to the Persian Gulf, and that the Empress of India should order her armies to clear Central Asia of the Muscovites, and drive them into the Caspian". It was this ultimate object which motivated Salisbury, the Secretary of State for India, to seek closer control over Kabul, and send Lytton to effect this purpose. The quest for the Scientific Frontier lay at the root of this policy which found its full expression in the years 1875 to 1880.

In pursuance of this principle of Scientific Frontier and to station British officers on the Herat line to act as observers of the events in the Russian Zone beyond, Salisbury asked Northbrook to procure "the assent of the Ameer to the establishment of a British Agency at Herat" to which one at Kandahar might be added subsequently. Also that a temporary mission be sent to Kabul. The reason advanced for this demand was "the comparative scantiness of the information"

from Kabul. The British Government was keen to obtain "more exact and constant information" about "the disposition of the people in various parts of Afghanistan, the designs and intrigues of its chiefs, the movement of nomad tribes on its frontier, the influence which foreign powers may possibly be exerting within and without its borders", as well as other details useful for military authorities. The Secretary of State had no faith in the Indian Agent at Kabul and desired presence of British officers in that country. The Government of India was unwilling for such a radical departure which must lead to alarm in Kabul and rouse suspicion of the Amir about the intentions of the British. Over all these years the Amir had expressed his unequivocal opposition to the stationing of British officers in his state and more than once he had been assured of Government of India's forbearance in the matter. Northbrook clearly told the India Office that the Amir was convinced that the British had no "designs of encroaching upon Afghanistan", and that as regards Russia there was identity between Kabul and Calcutta. The Viceroy opposed any departure from the non-intervention policy and impressed upon the Secretary of State his conviction that friendly relations with Afghanistan "will best be secured by a steady adherence to the patient and conciliatory policy which had been pursued by the Government of India for many years". He had no doubt about the sincere adherence of the Amir to friendship with India and that he had no "desire to prefer the friendship of other powers", particularly Russia. But this plea had no effect on the crystallised thinking of the Cabinet where opinion had gradually crystallised to the view that the "presence of British agents in Afghanistan was identical with the security of British interests, and that the refusal of the Amir was a clear sign of his hostility to the Government and his drift into the hostile camp of Russia". Such a thinking was palpably erroneous and resulting from the theoretical persistence in the principle of Scientific Frontier. The Government of India was opposed to it and cautioned the British Government against departure from the established policy which might end in the alienation of the Amir. The British Cabinet was not willing to pay any price to the Amir for his concession to permit the posting of

British officers on his frontier. The Viceroy enquired about their policy in regard to the desire of the Amir for unconditional assurance of the protection of his territories and effective assistance for fortifying Herat and improving his army. It was pointed out that at Simla the Amir's envoy had sought an offensive and defensive alliance with the Government of India as Sher Ali was not content with vague undertakings but wanted a definite treaty for his protection both against external attack and internal disorder. But the Cabinet did not appear to be prepared to move beyond the earlier non-commitment. Salisbury's insistence on his proposals made Northbrook resign and relinquish his office rather than subscribe to a course which he considered dangerous for the stability of friendly relations with the Amir of Kabul. Lord Lytton was appointed to succeed him and given specific instructions to execute the new Forward Policy, which he pursued with great zeal.

With this began, as Tytler has put it, obedience to the "deep-rooted impulse which was urging them forward to possess and control their natural frontier", and a repetition of Auckland's policy. "The principal objective of the British Government, was now as before the maintenance in Afghanistan as a strong and friendly power", and the means adopted towards this end were as before, in the light of recent advance of Russian arms in Central Asia, to make the Amir subservient to British interests. For the British Government could "not view with complete indifference the probable influence of that situation upon the uncertain character of an Oriental Chief whose ill-defined dominions are thus, within a steadily narrowing circle, between the conflicting pressures of two great military empires". Hence it was necessary "to re-establish direct contact with Sher Ali by the dispatch of a British Mission". This move of a temporary mission was a preliminary to the establishment of a permanent British envoy in Kabul with other British agents on the frontier towns to act as "listening posts" for what was passing in the Russian sphere. If and when the mission was received by the Amir, naturally he would raise his earlier demands of subsidy, recognition of Abdullah Jan and "treaty guaranteeing material support in case of foreign aggression". It appears.



from the Instructions and subsequent communications of the Secretary of State, that no material change had occurred in the attitude of the British Government, and it was endeavouring dissimulation by hiding the hollowness of its promises with a shroud of vaguenesses. The Viceroy was told that his envoy would frankly reject such of Amir's demands as "you have no intention of conceding". Others might be referred to the Government of India "with such favourable assurance as may induce the Ameer to recognize the advantage of facilitating, by compliance with your wishes, the fulfilment of his own. In case the Amir's demeanour was "such as to promise no satisfactory result of the negotiations thus opened", he "should be distinctly reminded that he is isolating himself, at his own peril, from the friendship and protection it is in his interest to seek and deserve". With this impending threat, the Amir was to gain nothing substantial. The British were not prepared to bind themselves "to any permanent pecuniary obligation" and the Viceroy was permitted to pay at his discretion and as the occasion demanded some pecuniary assistance. As regards recognition it was specifically mentioned that "recognition of a de facto order in the succession established by a de facto Government to the throne of a foreign state" does not imply or necessitate intervention in the internal affairs of that state.

To the third, namely the demand for a treaty of mutual defence, the policy now defined was no less ambiguous. Salisbury wrote, "Her Majesty's Government are prepared to sanction and support any more definite declaration which may, in your judgement, secure to their unaltered policy the advantages of which it has been deprived by an apparent doubt of its sincerity. But they must reserve to themselves entire freedom of judgement as to the character of circumstances involving the obligation of material support to the Ameer, and it must be distinctly understood that only in some clear case of unprovoked aggression would such an obligation arise". There was no improvement on the assurances given by Mayo or Northbrook, for even now the British Cabinet felt shy of paying the price for the new commitments which it desired to impose on the Amir. He was required to allow "undisputed access to its (Afghanistan's) frontier positions".

British Agents should also have "adequate means of confidentially conferring with the Ameer upon all matters as to which the proposed declaration would recognize a community of interests. They must be entitled to expect becoming attention to their friendly counsels; and the Ameer must be made to understand that..... territories ultimately dependent upon British power for their defence must not be closed to those of Queen's officers or subjects who may be duly authorised to enter them". Amir's consent was also to be obtained for the establishment of a telegraph line in his country. "Subject to these conditions" the Viceroy was authorised to comply "with any reasonable demand on the part of Sher Ali for more assured support and protection, such as pecuniary assistance, the advice of British officers in the improvement of his military organisation, or a promise, not vague, but strictly guarded and clearly circumscribed, of adequate aid against actual and unprovoked attack by any foreign power". In the event of suspicion of Amir's loss of "confidence in the security and power" of the British, the Viceroy was to reconsider", from a new point of view, the policy to be pursued in reference to Afghanistan". The conditions tagged to aid against external danger appear to be a repetition of the earlier experiments with Indian states, and were intended to ensure subservience of the Amir and complete surrender of his kingdom for establishing armed bases for operation against Russia. The developments in Central Asia and in the Near East had been in the background of these instructions. But the proposals to be made to the Amir were, as Duke of Argyll put it, "nothing but a series of ambiguities with a strong undercurrent of the former tendency to deception". In response to such terms, adorned by 'old limitations, provisos and equivocations' the Amir was required 'to demolish the very basis of Anglo-Afghan friendship by agreeing to the location of British agents in his kingdom'. It is not surprising that Sher Ali viewed these offers with misgivings and suspicion when they were placed before him. Moreover, the mode of their presentation smacked of threat and precipitancy which were bound to alarm him for his security and independence, and contributed to his ultimate alienation from the British.

Lytton, soon after the assumption of office of Governor-General, asked the Amir to accept a temporary British envoy who

would discuss with him matters of common interest. Sher Ali was not prepared for this sudden change in British attitude and declined to welcome the envoy on the ground, firstly of fear of security of the British officer owing to religious fanaticism of his people and secondly, that of a similar demand being made by the Russians. He offered to send his own envoy to Simla if there were any matters to discuss. The Viceroy did not approve of this alternative and decided to afford one further chance to the Amir to reconsider his decision which he might have been taken without due deliberation. His second letter of 8th July 1876, was at best an exhortation to the Amir to consider the consequences of his denial of British proposal, as in that event the British Government would be compelled "to look upon him as a prince who had voluntarily isolated his personal interests from its proffered alliance and support". The threat of the termination of alliance was implicit in these communications. By the middle of 1876 it was evident that the Viceroy was wholly committed to the forward move upto the Oxus to meet Russia halfway, unmindful of the consequences. The Amir obstinately refused to accept a British mission, but made two alternative suggestions, that either the envoys of the two states might meet on the frontier or the Indian Agent in Kabul might be called by the Viceroy "to expound the whole state of affairs" which he might communicate to the Amir privately to enable the latter "to decide what course it is incumbent on me to adopt in the interests of my country". Lytton summoned Ata Muhammed to Simla, in October 1876. It was clear from his conversations with the officials that the Amir had no contact with Persia and that he regarded "agents from Russia as sources of embarrassment". He was definite that the Amir held friendship with India as valuable for his interests but desired frankness in its character. He suspected double meaning in the statements of the British. Ata Muhammad also specified the matters which the Amir keenly desired. These were that no Englishman should reside in Afghanistan, that the British should disclaim all connection with his son, Yakub Khan, that a permanent subsidy be granted to him and that the British should refrain from all interference in his internal affairs. His most important demand was that the British should agree to support him, on demand, in case of

external aggression and that in any engagement entered into there should be embodied the expression that the "British Government regards the Ameer's friends and enemies as its own" as the Amir had done in the treaty of 1855. There was no indication of any unequivocal response to these. The Viceroy indulged in threats and emphasised the weakness of the Amir who was like an earthen pipkin between two iron pots. Lytton told the Agent that promise of aid in the event of attack from without was not gratuitous, but contingent on his loyalty, and "the moment we have cause to doubt his sincerity, or question the practical benefit of his alliance, our interests will be the other way and may greatly augment the dangers with which he is already threatened, both at home and abroad". Even an alliance with Russia was hinted at for the division of Afghanistan. The purpose of this provocative language was to compel the Amir to accede to British wish for their agents on his frontiers and accept special missions from time to time at his capital. In the event of Amir's submission, promises of aid, as before, were made but these were hedged in by limitations. Ata Muhammad's departure to Kabul was not to lead to soothing of feelings and the stage was set for final breach with Sher Ali.

The Government of India did not hesitate to misrepresent the attitude of Sher Ali as revealed by the Indian Agent. The Amir was represented as "resentful" at the "rebuffs" and "profoundly mortified by the repeated rejection of his previous requests for a defensive alliance", and that his refusal to receive British officers was not motivated by their security "but by a dread of their probable popularity and possible intervention on behalf of oppressed or discontented subjects". The Secretary of State was told that the Amir had no dread of Russia as he had strengthened his army with Indian assistance and that he had improved his relations with Russia with which permanent diplomatic intercourse had been established. The conclusion of the Governor-General in Council was that the system on which relations with Afghanistan had been conducted had not only led to Amir's alienation with the British but led to closeness and confidential character of his relations" with their enemy. It was also their view that Sher Ali would accept British officers if pressed sufficiently for fear of forfeit-

ing "the advantage of a long-desired alliance with the British". This interpretation of Ata Muhammad's communications was wholly in variance with what the documents reveal. But it was on this basis that the Indian Agent was to obtain the Amir's consent for British mission in his country, which Sher Ali could not accept and sign his death warrant as an independent ruler. However, he agreed to make one more effort at reconciliation and his Minister Nur Muhammad Shah met the British representative at the Conference of Peshawar in early 1877. The Conference had an unfortunate start as the two parties could not proceed beyond the discussion of controversy relating to Amir's earlier consent to receive British officers in his country. Nur Muhammad had begun by harping on the Amir's "mistrust of the good faith and sincerity of the British Government", reciting his grievances, while the British officers insisted on the reception of British agents. Meanwhile it was alleged that the Amir was making warlike preparations against the British, which falsehood was manufactured perhaps to discredit the Amir and afford an easy handle to terminate the Conference. In the final letter given to the Afghan envoy the condition of British officers being established on his northern frontiers was emphatically reiterated, and he was told that "as the Amir had refused this condition the British Government must repudiate all obligations entered into or offered, save those contained in the Treaty of 1855 which alone could be looked on as a permanent obligation binding both countries". It was a sinister move aimed at the ultimate partition of Afghanistan. About that time Nur Muhammad Shah died and the British envoys were told that the Amir was sending another envoy armed with instructions to accept British terms and demands. But before the envoy could come the Conference was precipitately discontinued by the Viceroy.

Commenting on the precipitate termination of the Conference Tytler, in his *Afghanistan*, assumes that Lytton was unconcerned about its peaceable conclusion, as his attitude indicates "a certain impatience of mind and a perhaps rather rigid determination to achieve a well-defined objective . . . on which he had resolved before ever he left Britain. This objective was the ultimate expression of the forward policy, to be carried out with little or no regard for Afghan wishes, but

with the answering determination to place the Indian defensive frontier... on the northern ridges of the Hindukush with outposts in the Oxus Valley beyond", at Balkh, Maimana and Herat. This task was to be accomplished by concluding an "exclusive alliance with the Amir, or failing this break-up the Afghan Kingdom and put in place of Sher Ali a ruler more friendly to our interests and more dependent on our support. If both these alternatives failed he would advocate, though with reluctance, the conquest and annexation of as much of Afghanistan as might be necessary to secure his objectives". This conclusion is definitely supported by Lytton's Minute of 4 September 1878, which clearly expounds his conception of the Scientific Frontier. The Viceroy had broken the Peshawar Conference when there was expectation of the Amir accepting his demands. But he felt prolongation of the Conference would "only lead to embarrassment and entanglements best avoided by the timely termination of it". This attitude and unseemly haste with which the negotiations were closed would disclose that he had some ulterior motives which were clearly to subordinate the Amir to his will or to break Afghanistan, whose integrity had been so avidly desired by his predecessors. On the unfounded news of Amir's preparations for a Jihad against the British, he withdrew the Indian Agent from Kabul and took steps to win over the frontier tribes and establish dominant influence in Kalat, Bajaur, Swat and Chitral. Lytton was alarmed by Russian moves in the Turkoman country aimed at the subjugation of Merv. In a mood of "Mervousness" which gripped the Government of India, the Viceroy's keenness for control over Herat and presence of British officers on Afghan frontier grew in intensity. He was convinced that Russian influence at Kabul had steadily replaced British influence, and even in spite of contrary statements, and protestations of the Russian Government, believed that in the reign of Sher Ali it would be "impossible for the Government of India to effect, by diplomatic means alone the object of having British Agents at Herat etc". Alternative means were to be found to counteract Russian influence being established at Kabul and their commanding Herat from the base at Merv. Hence in his despatch of 2 July 1877, Lytton emphasised that while friendly approach to Sher Ali would be the best solution, "the time may come

(and at no very distant date) when, in order to maintain the British Power in India, it will be absolutely necessary to undertake the military occupation of Western Afghanistan (whether with, or without the consent of the Ruler of that country) including the important fortress of Herat". He smelled dismemberment of Afghanistan at the moment leading to the "formation of a separate Khanata in Western Afghanistan which it might be feasible to bring under British influence and protection". Lytton insisted on taking prompt preventive measures to avert the dangers threatening the British by the persistent Russian advance in Central Asia. The British Government, however, cautioned the Viceroy against precipitancy and discounted immediate danger to Merv. Salisbury still emphasised the importance of Amir's goodwill. Lytton was held back from adopting any preemptory measures, but continued his secret hostile activities on his frontier aimed against Sher Ali.

Meanwhile, in Europe the Near Eastern crisis had developed into a war between Russia and Turkey, compelling Great Britain to lend its diplomatic support to the Sultan. The Russian army had moved nearer Constantinople forcing the Turkish ruler to sign the Treaty of San Stefano which extended considerable benefits to the Russian empire in the Balkans. Both Austria and England viewed with dismay the Russian gains, and attempted to reverse the one-sided engagement. Diplomacy seemed to be unavailing and war between England and Russia became imminent. British Prime Minister brought Indian forces to the Mediterranean, and Russia as a counter-measure mobilised troops on the Oxus. The British fleet was moved to the Dardenelles where Russian army and British navy lay within gunshot of each other for many months. The Russians also despatched a diplomatic mission to Kabul under General Stolietoff to gain Amir's confidence and support for their cause. Sher Ali reluctantly admitted the Russian envoy and received him on 26 July 1878. But by that date the Treaty of Berlin had been signed assuring peace in Europe. It is difficult to say whether this mission had gained any positive advantages or any treaty had been entered into by the two powers. But it is more certain that the Russian envoy arriving in Kabul after the signature of Berlin treaty and Russia having no desire to wage war with England, the Stolietoff Mission 'was but a frustrated

attempt'. And when the British protested to St. Petersburg, the Russian government agreed to withdraw it as it was of a temporary nature "the need for which had now disappeared". But the Russian mission had the effect of a red rag on Lytton, who decided on sending Sir Neville Chamberlain as British envoy to Kabul without previous consent of the Amir and with instructions to push on unless stopped by show of force. Lytton wrote on 14 August 1878, to Amir intimating his desire to send Chamberlain, but the death of Abdulla Jan, Sher Ali's heir apparent, on 17 December delayed the departure of the envoy. No reply was received by 21st September, on which date Cavaignari with a small escort met the Afghan officer at Ali Masjid and was told that further advance of the Mission would meet with repulse by force. This was an inevitable consequence of precipitancy and impatience of the Viceroy. To him the repulse was a proof of "the inutility of diplomatic expedients" in dealing with Kabul and "has deprived the Amir of all claim upon our further forbearance". Lytton's action was considered humiliating by the Amir who objected to the mode of his approach, for he would be prepared to receive the mission if it were not forced upon him. But the Viceroy seemed to be intent on creating a crisis to prove that Sher Ali was an enemy of the British and thereby justify him in adopting the arbitrament of the sword to implement his policy of Scientific Frontier. He was keen to go to war immediately, but under Salisbury's advice sent an ultimatum with the time limit of 20 November demanding apology, acceptance of permanent British Mission and forbearance from injury to tribes loyal to the British. Amir's reply was delayed, reaching a few days after the deadline, before which date invasion of Afghanistan had begun from the direction both of Khyber and Bolan passes. The die was thus cast 'and the troops, which had assembled long before, marched to punish a ruler whose only fault was that he loved the independence of his people'. The British, however, made distinction between the Amir and his subjects, as they declared that the armies were sent to punish a recalcitrant ruler 'from whose tyranny the people were to be freed'. The exit of Russia from the scene made the task of Lytton easier.

Sher Ali did not have the means to meet the attack by a superior military power possessed of the vast resources



of India. He asked for Russian support which was refused to him. He then moved with a small escort towards the Russian territories to seek the intervention of the Czar in his dispute with England. But he was sent back and on 21 February 1879 at Mazar-i-Sharif, he died disappointed and disconcerted. Before he left Kabul he had handed over control of affairs to his son Yakub Khan, who acted as Regent. Meanwhile British armies had occupied Jalalabad in the east and Kandahar in the west, while in the centre the Kurram force had occupied Peiwar Kotal. Negotiations were opened with Yakub Khan leading to the Treaty of Gandamak, on 26 May 1878, by which the new Amir had to cede territory comprising Kurram Pishin and Sibi, accept a permanent British envoy at Kabul and conduct his external relations with the advice of the Government of India. Lytton's purpose was achieved and the integrity of Afghanistan was protected. There was every prospect of permanent peace, but the old mistake of 1839 was repeated with the establishment of Sir Louis Cavagnari's Mission in Kabul and his attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of the kingdom. This unveiled exhibition of their dependence on foreign power created strong resentment in Afghanistan, breaking forth in a storm in all its fury, "massacring the British officers and throwing the country once again into the turmoils of a new war". Lytton had used the pretence of fighting the Amir while being friendly to the people in 1878, 'but a year later he had to face the hostility of the people themselves who were not prepared to brook any fetters on their freedom and who saw in the presence of British officers in their capital, and their haughty behaviour, the symptoms of their slavery". The new war was to be a bitter one. Yakub Khan resigned when Kabul was taken by the British and other strategic points had been occupied by them. He was brought to India. Kabul was taken under direct administration by General Roberts and in Kandahar an Afghan Chief Sher Ali was appointed Governor to administer the province under the supervision of General Stewart. But this was not a permanent arrangement. The British wished to relinquish the country and search was made for a successor to the throne.

Abdur Rahman, son of Afzal Khan, had been living at

Samarkand under Russian protection since expulsion from his native land, and had been keenly watching events in Afghanistan. The tragic happenings in Kabul culminating in the death of Sher Ali, elimination of Yakub Khan and his brother and the military occupation of the country, led the Sardar to conceive of a return to his country and fish in the troubled waters. In this resolve he was encouraged by Russian authorities who provided him with some arms and money. Abdur Rahman found much support in Afghan Turkestan where he assembled a sizeable force with which he moved towards Kabul. The news of his movement was communicated to the Government of India which was not averse to his accession to the throne of Kabul if he was amenable to their wishes. The massacre of Cavagnari and other British officers in Kabul had convinced the British that a permanent military occupation of Afghanistan was an impossible task; hence Lytton was prepared for an arrangement which would ensure the benefits of Gandamak. He had decided on a partition of the country which was to be implemented by separating Kandahar under the rule of Sher Ali and giving away Herat to Persia under certain conditions. The choice of a ruler for Kabul was open for which Abdur Rahman was acceptable if he abided by the terms of the British. Hence a letter was sent to him on 2 April requiring him to submit "representations that you may desire to make to the British Government with regard to your object in entering Afghanistan". Orally he was informed that the British had no intention of annexing the country but their wish was to see "a strong and friendly Amir firmly established at Kabul" Abdur Rahman replied on 21 April seeking joint protection of British and Russia, but expressing his eagerness to secure British friendship. Meanwhile Stewart had marched from Kandahar to Kabul crushing the opposition of Ghilvais and tribes who were hostile to Abdur Rahman. Also the news of the Afghan debacle had helped the defeat of Disraeli Government and the return of Liberal Gladstone as Prime Minister of Great Britain. This change in government led to reversal of policy in Afghanistan and the resignation of Lytton and appointment of Ripon as Viceroy. Before these developments had come about, Lytton had declared his policy regarding severance of Kandahar,

British evacuation of Kabul in October and seating Abdur Rahman on the throne there. Meanwhile the Gladstone Cabinet had determined its policy and communicated its views to the Government of India. It was opposed to dismemberment of Afghanistan and desired to have a "strong, friendly and independent" state there. On this basis negotiations were carried on with Abdur Rahman who was proclaimed Amir of Kabul on 22 July 1880.

Once again debate about scientific frontier began and old convictions were reiterated. But Lawrence's policy of non-intervention, reverting to the line of the Indus, with suitable modifications found favour with the Liberal Government. The tragic experience of two costly but unnecessary wars had fortified the belief that in the existing situation of Afghanistan it was dangerous to station British officers in that country. It was also evident that the Afghans prized their independence and would not tolerate open meddling with their internal affairs. There was also little doubt that they hated the Russians as much as the British and that Kabul government would not countenance Russian influence in their state. Abdur Rahman was inclined to be friendly to the Government of India. Hence a policy of abstention from active interference in internal affairs and placing a British Resident or other officers in Kabul, Herat or other towns was determined upon. The only condition to be imposed on the Amir was that he would have no direct relations with any foreign powers except through the British, to which Abdur Rahman was agreeable. On 14 June 1880 these terms were communicated to the Amir in a letter which formed the basis of future relations between Afghanistan and India. On the Amir's acceptance these were incorporated in a formal letter, which was repeated in 1882, and was thus invested with the sanctity of treaty. The Amir was told that "with regard to the position of the ruler of Kabul to foreign Powers, since the British Government admit no right of interference by foreign Powers in Afghanistan, and since both Russia and Persia are pledged to abstain from all interference with Afghan affairs, it is plain that the Kabul ruler can have no political relations with any foreign Power except the English; and if any such foreign Power should attempt to interfere in Afghanistan, and if such interference

should lead to unprovoked aggression on the Kabul ruler, then the British Government will be prepared to aid him, if necessary, to repel it, provided that he follows the advice of the British Government in regard to his external relations". Further it was added, "The British Government desires to exercise no interference in your internal government... nor will you be required to admit an English Resident anywhere". Initially Abdur Rahman was not given Kandahar territory, where a separate ruler was established. But when Ayub Khan invaded Kandahar and Sher Ali was unable to resist him for which British forces had to be sent, it was clear that a separate Khanate would involve constant military existence there occasioning considerable expenditure from the finances of India. British Parliament was opposed to occupation of any part of Afghanistan. Hence Kandahar and Herat were also given to the Amir of Kabul and once again an integrated kingdom, friendly to the British, whose external relations were governed by them, was restored. It was a complete reversal of Lytton's forward policy and repudiation of adventurism in the case of Afghanistan. The Government of India, however, was assured of a friendly neighbour without departing radically from their well-trodden path. The declarations of 1880 and 1882 did not differ substantially from what Mayo or Northbrook had announced, except that the clause relating to the discretion of the British Government which had produced vagueness and misgivings was dropped, and now 'defined unequivocally the obligations of two parties and thereby established their friendship on a more concrete foundation'.

The next step was to ensure that the Russians respected their obligation to abstain from interference in Afghanistan, and kept beyond its frontiers. In 1873 the Czar's Government had accepted the principle that the northern boundary of Afghanistan was the river Oxus upto a point known as Khoja Saleh, but the entire line in the north-west was undefined, and with the Russian occupation of Merv, opened the dangerous prospect of their advance upto Herat. The Amir was also worried by the increasing influx of refugees from the Tekka country which might lead to armed clash any moment. Hence British diplomacy was directed to the delimitation of Russo-Afghan border, and in May 1884 it was agreed between

London and St. Petersburg that commissioners should be appointed to find a frontier line satisfactory to both powers. After considerable delays and hesitations the two commissioners set to their task, but in the intervening period, the Russian forces had advanced towards Panjdeh where a clash occurred with Afghan outposts in which the latter were repulsed. This incident provoked outbursts of passion both in India and England and British Parliament even voted funds for war with Russia. But the Amir who was then at Rawalpindi visiting the Viceroy Dufferin maintained equanimity and decided to accept territory in exchange for Panjdeh, and with that the crisis subsided. The Afghan boundary was fixed in 1887 and the danger of Russian encroachment was eliminated. By the agreement of 1880 India had the obligation to defend the Amir's territories from any unprovoked external aggression, which implied that the defence of the Hindukush and Oxus frontier was its obligation. In an indirect way the Scientific Frontier for which long quest had continued since the days of Auckland had been achieved.

## *The Defence of the Indian Frontier North-West And West*

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The settlement with Afghanistan under its new ruler brought to a close an important phase in India's foreign policy. In a period of eighty years, the British Government in India, impelled by motives of security and fighting the aggressive designs of rival European powers, had adopted the method of creating a barrier of friendly but dependent indigenous states on the border. Afghanistan was the chief ground where experiments were made in this direction. With the conclusion of the Second Afghan War, the British had succeeded in making an arrangement with its Amir by which subordination of his foreign relations and responsibility for the defence of his dominions had been achieved. These were the two aspects of the new policy which basically concerned itself with the subordinating of the external relations of dependent states and controlling their policies. Payment of subsidies and obligation to defend their integrity and independence from any foreign attacks were the necessary concomitants of this policy. Ripon's formula to subordinate foreign policy without interfering in the internal affairs was adopted in preference to the technique of seating a dependent ruler on the throne of Kabul, advocated by Auckland or Lytton, and which had culminated in tragic failures. After 1880, the Government of India secured a legal title to influence and direct the foreign relations of Afghanistan and assumed a corresponding obligation to maintain its independence. Similar arrangements were made with many other border states which were converted into bulwarks of India's defence. The obliga-

tions towards such states were those of protection against aggression, arbitration of disputes and restraint on their bellicose tendencies. There was no design then to interfere in their internal affairs. By this means they were prevented from developing into bases, political or military, of a hostile or rival European empire. In the north-west thus a barrier of friendly states was interposed against Russian expansionism, but the danger from that quarter had not been wholly eliminated as that empire had been seeking to extend its dominion in other directions approaching the borders of India. In this new situation, strategic considerations determined India's policies and conditioned its relations with Afghanistan and other frontier states.

Immediately after the termination of war with Afghanistan, the British Indian government as well as the Amir was agitated by the Russian threat to Merv and the Turkoman country. Russian occupation of this territory, and it was consummated in 1884, posed a threat to Herat and made Russian frontiers co-terminus with those of Afghanistan. This close contiguity of Russian dominion with Herat roused serious apprehensions in Calcutta and Kabul. Recourse to military action was impracticable owing to the uncertain attitude of the Afghans. Therefore steps were taken for the demarcation of Russo-Afghan border which it was believed would eliminate chances of conflict. The agreement of 1873 was invoked and the Russian and British governments decided to appoint a joint Commission to determine and demarcate the border from the Persian frontier to the river Oxus, which was the boundary between Afghanistan and Russian empire in the north. Delays and procrastinations marked the commencement of its operations, but ultimately the Commission met and, by 1887, in spite of the Panjdeh incident, the whole frontier was demarcated and pillars erected. By this measure the Government of India had assumed entire responsibility for the defence of areas of strategic significance in the north-west where the integrity of Afghanistan and a strong and stable administration were the *sine qua non* of India's security. But there was no end of danger to the protection of India's northern frontiers. There was further intensification of rivalry and hostility between England and Russia, and the German and French empires had also emerged as rivals of the British in

the east, which had their inevitable reaction on India's foreign policy.

Towards Afghanistan British attitude once again registered drift towards Forward Policy in the Viceroyalty of Lansdowne. Ripon was a realist and was not alarmed easily by Russian posture in Central Asia. He failed to believe that Russia had any desire "to acquire the possession of a vast territory like India lying at an enormous distance from their own country" or "deep designs against our power in the East". Yet he depreciated Russian interference in Afghanistan and was keen for a treaty with the Czar's government to delimit the spheres of interest of the two empires in that region. Dufferin had also succeeded in winning the confidence of the Amir who accepted a secondary role in the delimitation of his own north-western frontier. At Rawalpindi, despite the Panjdeh affair, Abdur Rahman pledged his friendship to the British Government and promised "to be our faithful friend and ally" and "to stand side by side" with it. This amity was consistently reflected in the Amir's acceptance of the line of the frontier demarcated by the Boundary Commission and his reception of Ridgeway at Kabul. But Lansdowne was made of another stuff and, true to the conservative tradition, adhered to Forward Policy which created misunderstandings and resentment in Kabul. His manner was brusque and approach rigid. He failed to appreciate the critical position of Abdur Rahman in his own country and was ever determined to snub the Amir and compel him to subserve British interests. Naturally Abdur Rahman was unhappy with his relationship with Calcutta and desired direct contact with London, where he wanted to go personally to plead his cause with the Queen and her government. Lansdowne had given him offence by rebuking him for the cruel punishment accorded to rebels in his northern provinces, which the Amir "considered an unjustifiable interference in his internal administration". Also the Viceroy's insistence on a British Mission which Amir had himself suggested in Dufferin's time, but which he was not prepared to accept in the changed circumstances, could not fail to generate resentment and suspicion in Kabul. Consistent British advance on his frontier aimed at bringing the frontier tribes directly under their sway, and the warning to the Amir to desist from interference in the petty



chiefships of Swat, Dir and Bajaur, further strained the relations between the Amir and the Viceroy. So that till 1893, when Durand Mission succeeded in alleviating Amir's resentment and arranging a settlement of the Indo-Afghan border, the strain of ill-will subsisted in the relationship between India and Afghanistan.

British attitude towards Kabul was in a measure influenced by Russian policies and activities in Central Asia. The demarcation of the Afghan boundary in the north and north-west from Zulfikar Pass to the Oxus had eased the situation in that direction. But the undecided boundary to the east of Khamiab and Lake Victoria "created considerable friction" between England and Russia. By the agreement of 1873, the river Oxus was accepted as the boundary line between Russian and Afghan territories, but two provinces of Roshan and Shignan, beyond the Oxus, were in Afghan possession. The Russians claimed these two regions. There was also the problem of Wakhan which owing to its inhospitability and inaccessibility the Amir did not desire to own. The British were not prepared to let the Russians possess such an important strategic position through which Indian frontiers in the north might be vulnerable to aggression. Apart from these areas, to future disposition of the Pamir region was of immense significance for the British as its occupation by Russia would expose their northern frontier. Pamir was an unexplored territory and portions of it belonged to Afghanistan and China. The Government of India had sent some officers there ostensibly on a geographical expedition but in reality to have full acquaintance with that region. British policy there was to keep Russia at a distance from Indian frontiers and consequently they encouraged China and Afghanistan to occupy the vacant gap. Russia had also despatched its officers with military escort to explore the Pamirs and occupy territory there. The Russian officer Yanoff arrested Davidson a British officer and demanded withdrawal of another officer Younghusband from Bozai Gumbaz in Wakhan territory. He had also ordered massacre of a small Afghan force in that region. This high-hardness might have led to clash, and Amir Abdur Rahman felt very bitter at his loss and threatened to evacuate Wakhan. The Government of India tried to soothe his feelings by pled-

ging to take up the matter with Russia. Meanwhile they asked the Amir to desist from any military action in that area. The Russian Government was in an amiable mood and not only apologised for the indiscretion of their officer but accepted the proposal for the demarcation of the undefined territory. The Russian threat to his north-eastern frontier had softened the Amir's attitude towards the British and he was led into the mood to accept their mediation in the settlement of boundaries. The Durand Mission in 1893 was cordially received in Kabul and succeeded in persuading the Amir to give up Roshan and Shignan. Subsequently an Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission was appointed to delimit the boundaries in Pamir which was completed in 1895. The Russians were given the entire plateau of Pamir except Taghdumbash Pamir. The Afghans gave up Trans-Oxus territories of Roshan and Shignan but were assigned Darwaz to the south of the Oxus, besides Wakhan which the Amir agreed to retain. In the southern Pamir a narrow strip about eight miles in width from Kizil Robat to the Chinese frontier, fell to the share of Afghanistan. Though it was not of much significance to the Amir, as "it was too distant and difficult a country for him to hold", it was of immense strategic importance to the Indian authorities as it ensured the security of their frontier and operated as a wedge between the spheres of influence of Russia and Great Britain. Singhal is of the view that the "Afghan Boundary Commission and the Pamir Commission settled the boundary between Russia and Afghanistan, and thus a constant threat to Indian interests was removed". However the presence of the Russian empire so close to Indian frontiers and its continuous build-up of Railways and roads, and expansionist designs did not help to lull the British fears of Russian aggression.

Prior to the settlement of the Pamir problem, the relations between India and Afghanistan had been severely strained because of the aggressive tone of Lansdowne who was keen to revive the quest for scientific frontier in its modified form. The urge for ensuring the defence of India from a possible Russian threat was once again the motivation for adopting the forward policy. The Hindukush line was not the objective now, but the aim was to place Indian north-western frontier at such strategic points as would enable rapid advance of

British forces to the threatened positions on the Russo-Afghan border. Herat had not ceased to be considered as the gateway of India, and though the placing of British army and observers there on a permanent basis was no longer sought for, the building of military bases nearest to Kandahar and Ghazni and connecting them with a network of railways and roads emerging from cantonments in India was the immediate programme. These schemes of active defence included the construction of railway line to Chaman, beyond the Bolan Pass, a railway line through Khyber Pass, laying of telegraph lines in the Afghan kingdom, adequate control over the Kurram Valley and extending British influence over the tribes on the Indo-Afghan frontier. The line upto Chaman with its terminus near the Chaman Fort did not satisfy the British who claimed a few more miles of territory to site the railway station at New Chaman. They had transferred railway construction material there to be able in case of need to extend the line upto Kandahar. Despite Afghan protests the line upto New Chaman was laid. Lansdowne was keen to occupy Wana, a position of great strategic significance as it dominated the tribal area. He was eager to bring the Waziri, Turi and Afridi tribes wholly under British control. The ownership of Darband was another point of dispute, so also was the impression in Calcutta that Amir Abdur Rahman was intriguing with the tribes in the Khyber region and was putting obstacles to the establishment of their control over the frontier tribes. No problem was insoluble but the will for pacific settlement was lacking, and the Viceroy to forget that Abdur Rahman owed his throne to the British and therefore morally bound to accept all their demands and subserve their interests. The Amir naturally resented this attitude and was not prepared to accept the humiliating position of a dependent. He was keen to safeguard the independence of his people and save every inch of his dominion. Lansdowne's behaviour therefore was obvious to him and thus estrangement of feelings occurred between the two; but his loyalty to British friendship was undoubted.

With the assumption of Viceroyalty by Lansdowne, relations between India and Afghanistan became strained. Both the governments felt offended by the behaviour of each other. The British viewed with intense disfavour the Amir's treatment of their Agent in Kabul who was held "almost as a prisoner".

They resented his proclamations to his subjects which "displayed hostility alike to Russia and Great Britain". They took umbrage to his taxation policy and state monopolies which were believed to have ruined their trade with Afghanistan. The Amir was also charged of exhibiting hostility to all persons "who had assisted the British in any manner". More serious, from British angle, were the Amir's attempts to project his political influence over the tribes and Chiefships on the Indo-Afghan frontier. His occupation of Asmar up the Kunar valley was believed to threaten Bajaur and extend his kingdom to the vicinity of Chitral, menacing the independence of the chiefships of Swat, Bajaur and Chitral. Abdur Rahman was further suspected of aggressive action towards the Afridis and endeavouring "to win over the mullas and influential men of the tribe". His attitude towards the Turis in Kurram valley and indirect occupation of a part of its northern portion led the British to send troops to maintain order there. The stationing of Afghan officers "at Wana, situated at the western extremity of the Gomal" pass in the Waziri country, with a view to dominate the two important routes of Gomal and Tochi, threatened the Mahsud Waziris and evoked retaliatory action by the British in sending their troops to Gomal pass. The Amir was also blamed for having his eye on Chagah in the Baluch territory which was important in the context of the projected railway between Quetta and Nushki. The Government of India assumed, as Tytler has put it, that "all along the frontier the Amir was making his presence felt" and was thus "proving himself an incompatible neighbour". Lansdowne as well as his successor Elgin, motivated by the demands of Forward Policy, were endeavouring to bring the frontier tribes under British control and embrace the tribal territory within their schemes of frontier defence against possible Russian threat. Any obstruction in the realisation of their plan was bound to offend the British who now looked upon Abdur Rahman as a thorn in their side.

On the other hand, the Amir also cherished many grievances against the Government of India. He felt uneasy at the steady advance of the British up to the passes of the north-west frontier and guarding them with local tribal levies. It was tantamount to restricting him from bringing his own people under his sway. But he was most disturbed

by their railway schemes. The tunnelling of the Khojak range and the building of the station and fort at New Chaman were taken by him as "pushing a knife into my vitals". The Amir's reaction to this railway extension to Chaman was to force his nationals to boycott the railway, and merchants to desist from using the station. The British had also taken up railway survey in the valley of the Kabul river and in that process had encroached on its northern banks in the territory of the Amir. Abdur Rahman had naturally to prevent encroachment of his territories. Indian military authorities "had also been extending existing garrisons to meet any threat, present or prospective, of a Russian invasion of Afghanistan in force". It could not fail to create alarm in Kabul. But the Amir took greatest offence at the pressing insistence of Lansdowne to send Roberts, the Commander-in-Chief, as an envoy with an escort of 10,000, to meet the Amir. Roberts was the author of the forward policy and not sympathetic to Abdur Rahman, who adopted various subterfuges to put off this mission, by putting forth the excuse of Hazara rising and his illness, so that its timing might be postponed till after the retirement of Roberts which was imminent. The Government of India had also been pressing the Amir to accept British officers on his northern frontier and wished to know the strength and disposition of his armed forces. All these were regarded by him as interference in his internal affairs and transgression of the terms of agreement with him. He was not inclined to drift towards Russia and was definitely attached to British alliance. But he could not feel assured with a Government headed by men like Lansdowne and Roberts, and desired direct contact with London, which was not permitted by the British. All these steps chagrined Abdur Rahman. He sent a British engineer in his service named Pyne to Calcutta, on his way to London, with his letter. Pyne assured the British of Amir's goodwill, and on return to Kabul satisfied the Amir with the good intentions of Calcutta. He disarmed Amir's prejudices against Durand, the Foreign Secretary of the Government of India; and Abdur Rahman agreed to the visit of Durand Mission which came about in 1893.

Durand was sent with the dual object of conciliating the Amir to the loss of his trans-Oxus possessions as a pre-

liminary to the settlement of Pamir question and of fixing the boundary between India and Afghanistan to eliminate perpetual clashes and consequent ill will between the two Governments. By his suasive manners and firm attitude Durand was successful in achieving both the purposes. As has been mentioned earlier the Amir relinquished Roshan and Shignan and the way was cleared for the appointment of Pamir Boundary Commission. More significant, however, was his mission to remove tension between Calcutta and Kabul for which he was authorised "to come to a friendly understanding" with Abdur Rahman. The Amir had entertained suspicions of British intentions and attitude towards him and had felt alarmed by the stoppage of arms purchased by him and the persistent obstinacy in thrusting British officers and unwanted Robert's mission on him. Abdur Rahman was therefore to be "convinced of the friendly intentions of the Government of India in the matter of" railway line to Chaman, and to assure him "of the identity of interests between the two governments" by repeating the pledge of support extended in 1880 against unprovoked external aggression. An important task of the mission was to discuss with the Amir "the whole question of the frontier settlement between India and Afghanistan" and explain to him their necessity "to maintain direct relations with the independent border tribes", particularly the Waziris and Afridis as well as the chiefships of Bajaur and Swat. The Amir was to be induced to renounce his control over them and as price his subsidy was to be enhanced and arms released. Durand was successful in disarming Amir's suspicions and persuaded him to agree to a border settlement by which he "practically gave up his claim to suzerainty over the independent frontier tribes". Amir's occupation of Asmar was conceded and Birmal valley was left to him. The British, however, secured "complete command" of the Waziris, Afridis, Kakars and Bajauris. Agreement was also made that the frontier would soon be demarcated, for which a Commission toured the area and fixed the boundary line which is known as the Durand Line. In consequence of that Wana was brought under British control, Chaman dispute was settled and the Amir withdrew from Chagah. The Durand Agreement gave to the Government of

India legal right to enforce subordination of the warlike and turbulent frontier tribes who valued their freedom, and thus it was involved into a perennial conflict with them necessitating frequent armed excursions into the inhospitable frontier regions to organise the defense of the Indian border. For some years there was no open clash between Kabul and Calcutta, and though the Amir was unhappy at the loss of suzerain rights over the frontier tribes and did not view with equanimity the development of communications so close to his frontiers, till his death in 1901, the relations between India and Afghanistan did not deteriorate.

In the last three years of the nineteenth century there was an eruption of tribal risings on the frontier calling for severe military action to suppress their revolt. Both Elgin and Curzon suspected Amir's complicity but abstained from any open action against him. Russian activities in Seistan and other regions in the vicinity of Afghanistan opened afresh the whole problem of imperial defense which prompted re-initiation of railway scheme and road construction plans. The Kabul Government would not permit extension of telegraph or railway lines into its territories and obstinately declined to permit location of British officers on its northern frontiers. However, to achieve this purpose, on the death of Abdur Rahman and accession of his son Habibullah to the throne, Curzon sought revision of the political settlement of 1880 on the ground that it was personal and not dynastic. In the new settlement Curzon wanted to incorporate fresh provisions relating to British officers on the frontier, construction of telegraph lines and even railway and roads into Afghanistan, and commercial privileges. Habibullah did not accept Curzon's contention and refused to consider any revision, and insisted that the undertakings entered into by his father were binding on him. Curzon despatched Dane Mission to persuade the new Amir to fall into line with his thinking; but Habibullah would not be hood-winked into submission. Tension was brewing but Curzon did not find support in London for his view and had to yield to the acceptance of a mere reiteration of the old understanding by the Amir. A treaty was signed on 21 March 1905 renewing the existing engagements and the Amir was styled 'His Majesty'.

Singhal's assessment is that the treaty "helped the Amir immensely in placing his faith in British friendship and it put an end to a period of mutual distrust and suspicion. Legal embodiment of political commitments inspired the Amir to repose greater confidence in British professions, which paved the way for better and closer mutual understanding". But this rapprochement was of short duration for when the Anglo-Russian Convention was signed in 1907, without Amir's consent, a fresh wave of misunderstanding and distrust arose.

Imperial necessities and European international compulsions prompted gradual drift towards a detente between Russia and Great Britain which culminated in the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. Growing German rivalry and her increasing imperial inclinations as well as tremendous rise in industrial production and consequent expansion of external commerce compelled the British Government to seek allies to counteract German threat to their economic and imperial interests. Alliance with Japan broke British isolation and the Anglo-French Entente of 1904 exhibited to the world that England was not alone and had friends. France was an ally of Russia, therefore it was unlikely that Great Britain should long maintain its attitude of hostility towards the Czarist empire. Also there was need of preventing the drift of Russia into the German camp. Hence steps were taken to come to an understanding in respect of their conflict of interests in Asia. Agreement was arrived at in respect of Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet by partitioning Persia into two spheres of influence and recognising Afghanistan and Tibet falling wholly within the sphere of British influence. Russia accepted Afghanistan as of special interest to the British who were free to operate as intermediaries through whom Afghan external relations were to be conducted. Russia promised not to send any agents to Kabul while the British Government agreed not to alter the political status of Afghanistan. Abstinence from annexation of any part of that state or to interfere in its internal affairs was guaranteed by the British and equality of commercial opportunity between the two empires in Afghanistan was assured. The Convention was to come into force on its acceptance by the Amir, but Habibullah never gave his consent, and the Convention became operative inspite of his



reluctance. The Government of India was not happy with this agreement which was made entirely in British interest. The growing friendliness between Kabul and Calcutta, which was strengthened by Habibullah's visit to India in 1907, was however transformed in a sullenness on the part of the Amir which perhaps engendered tension in the tribal territory and was not dispelled in the succeeding years. Yet the Amir did not succumb to anti-British feelings of a section of his subjects or to Pan-Islamic propaganda and Turko-German pressure during the Great War of 1914-1918. He permitted the visit of the German Mission and allowed some Indian revolutionaries endeavouring to promote anti-British risings in India to stay in his country. But even when the British fortunes were at a low ebb and despite great strain on him, the Amir held fast to the treaty of 1905 and did not encourage hostile activities against them. Thus till his assassination early in 1919 relations between India and Afghanistan maintained an even keel. Over all these years the fear of Russian expansionism had also disappeared, and though German activities in West Asia had kept the British on tenter-hooks, there was no imminent danger of their intrusion into Afghanistan. In this situation therefore passivity governed the policies of both Kabul and Delhi and peace remained between the two. Afghanistan had virtually become a British protectorate and the Government of India used it as a shield in the defence of India against possible German aggression, and constant preparations were made to strengthen the defences of the frontiers of India.

In the first two decades of the present century, sentiments of nationalism had found vent in the tradition dominated kingdoms of Asia with their medieval social structures, and cries of revolution were heard there. Amir Habibullah had attempted modernisation of his country by adopting western ways of life and establishing new industries. This had offended the feelings of the orthodox section which was swayed by religion. Ideas of nationalism often lead to revivalism and rigid conservatism in such societies. Habibullah's ways were odious to this group which was also eager to throw off British yoke. His assassination was the result of these pulls which hurled his successor Amanullah into open conflict with the Government of India at a time when revolutionary wave was sweeping

the Indian masses and the British military strength was at its lowest in the country. When Habibullah died, his brother Nasrullah Khan was proclaimed Amir at Jalalabad by the conservative party comprising the Mullhas, tribes and Inayatullah the eldest son of the late Amir. But this succession was disputed by Amanullah, the third son of the Amir, who was in Kabul and was in control of the arsenal and the capital city. He won the support of the army which proclaimed him Amir, and Nasrullah also tendered his submission. He was held responsible for the murder of the late Amir and sentenced to life imprisonment but died shortly afterwards. Amanullah was accepted as ruler by the people and the army but soon the wind was against him and he declared Jihad against the British to win over the army and the religious zealots in his country and exploit the situation in the Punjab and North-west Frontier Province created by the tragedy of Jalianwala Bagh and cruel persecution of the people by the British. Amanullah incited the tribes on both sides of the Indo-Afghan frontier and massed his force in Dakka, Khost and Kandhar for eventual attack on India. What he aimed at by these measures was the independence of Afghanistan and status of equality in the comity of nations. His father Habibullah was not content with the mere honorific title of His Majesty. He had asked for participation in the Peace Conference and a few days before his death, in February 1919, he had demanded "recognition by the Peace Conference of the absolute liberty, freedom of action, and perpetual independence of his kingdom". The Amir was smarting under his dependence on the British-Indian government in the matter of his foreign relations. Amanullah on his accession had proclaimed that "the kingdom of Afghanistan should be internally and externally independent and free, that is to say, that all rights of Government, that are possessed by other independent power of the world should be possessed in their entirety by Afghanistan". In this craving for freedom the Amir had the full backing of his subjects who were moved by sentiments of nationalism. The Government of India did not respond to these sentiments. Hence a jihad or religious war was declared against it to synchronise with the revolutionary happenings in northern India. But the Dakka force was precipitate in com-

mening hostilities which began on 3 May 1919 before rising in Peshawar could come about. The Government of India was in a position to mobilise a force of 1,40,000 men and some aircraft which inflicted severe losses in Jalalabad and other points on the Khyber front. Only in Zhobe did Nadir Khan gain momentary success, besieged that and raised Afridi tribesmen against the British. However, this success was short-lived. Kabul was bombarded and on the Kandhar front the Afghans gained little foothold. These reverses and the panic ensuing from the operations of the Royal Air Force compelled Amanullah to seek armistice on 31 May. Negotiations were commenced leading to the provisional treaty of August 8, 1919, signed at Rawalpindi. By the agreement, peace was established between the two states. The British, however, as a mark of displeasure withdrew the privilege extended earlier to the Amir to import arms and ammunitions through India and confiscated the arrears of subsidy which was now stopped. The British Government at the same time expressed their intention to re-establish friendly relations with Kabul provided the Amir by his actions demonstrated his sincere desire for friendship, and showed inclination to receive an Afghan mission after six months to discuss terms of stable peace and friendliness. The Amir on his part accepted the Indo-Afghan frontier as laid down earlier and agreed to an early demarcation of the undemarcation of the undemarcated portion of the frontier. Accompanying the treaty was a letter signed by Sir Hamilton Grant assuring the Afghanistan Government that the treaty contained nothing which would interfere with the "complete liberty of Afghanistan either in internal or external matters". He further reiterated that the "Treaty and this letter leave Afghanistan officially free and independent in its internal and external affairs". Amanullah could claim this as a great advantage which was bound to bolster up his prestige among his subjects.

In pursuance of this agreement the delegates of the two states assembled at Mussoorie in the summer of 1920, where terms of a substantive peace treaty were thrashed out. The British Government was prepared to accept full independence of Afghanistan and to maintain friendly relations with it, provided the latter gave guarantees of preventing all action

within its boundaries prejudicial to the security of their empire in India and abstaining from incitement to the frontier tribes. In the event of such an assurance the British were prepared to extend "assistance and concessions" to it. These related to import of arms, assistance of material for telegraph and railway construction, facilities for commerce and postal communications. The Government of India was particularly keen that Russian agents and Indian revolutionary leaders then in Kabul should be ousted from there, and Afghanistan should keep aloof from Soviet propaganda. The Amir was in a mood to oblige the British who were themselves keen to prevent his drift under Russian influence. Hence the final treaty was signed on 2 November 1921 at Kabul by which the two governments agreed mutually to "respect all rights of internal and external independence." The Indo-Afghan border was accepted, and provision was made for the establishment of a British envoy in Kabul and an Afghan envoy in London, along with consulates at Kandhar and Jalalabad for the British and Calcutta, Bombay and Karachi for the Afghans. Other clauses related to import of arms and ammunition, trade, customs exemption and supply of materials for the development of Afghanistan, such as telegraph wires, railway material and machines for factories. There was, however, no payment of subsidy to the Amir or responsibility for the defence of his dominions which had been an essential aspect of the earlier agreement. Thus this treaty which governed Indo-Afghan relations in future was a frank recognition of the new developments in Asia and an unambiguous expression of the keenness of the British Government to prevent Communist Russian influence being established in Kabul. It was also a sign of the impracticability of the old policy of maintaining a ring of dependent subsidised states on the borders of India, which had sustained so long but was anachronistic in the new dispensation. Another phase of foreign policy, particularly respecting Afghanistan had come to a close, though its recognition as a major factor in the defence of India continued to determine British policy towards this border kingdom on the north-western frontier.

The basic consideration in British policy towards Afghanistan was to prevent Russian influence being established

so close to their Indian frontiers. In making the treaty with Amanullah, absolutely in variance with their traditional attitude towards Kabul, the British were governed by the motive of preventing the king from entering into closer relations with the Soviet Union. They had admitted the complete independence of Afghanistan, both in its external and internal affairs, and were keenly watching the behaviour of the new Amir, whose policies were fast introducing revolutionary changes in a tribal, feudalistic, medieval society. Amanullah had made a treaty with Russia providing for payment of subsidy by the Soviet Union and gift arms to him. Reciprocal establishment of Legations and Consulates was also agreed to. Treaties were also made with Turkey and Persia, which both states were then in friendly agreement with the Soviet Union. These treaties had preceded the Anglo-Afghan settlement of 1921. Later a treaty of non-aggression was made with Russia and treaties were also contracted with France, Italy and Germany, providing for loan of experts and material for the development of Afghanistan. Scientists, technicians and archaeologists came to Kabul from these states where a foreign colony was established. Amanullah tried to emulate Kamal Pasha of Turkey or Raza Shah of Iran in modernising his country without considering the temper of "his fanatical and suspicious subjects". His reforms were excellent but the peace with which he pushed them forth proved his ruin. Measures relating to emancipation of women and their education came in particularly for vehement opposition by the orthodox *mullahs* and the uncouth tribesmen. The result was increasing resentment against him and preparation for revolt. At that time he decided to undertake a tour of European countries where he was well received, but the actual gains were not considerable. His return journey embraced Turkey and Iran and from Tehran he drove his Rolls Royce car to Kandhar. The unveiled presence of his queen in western capitals roused great offence among his conservative countrymen. The consequence was a rising of the tribes in the south-east, and before it could be suppressed, an adventurer, styled brigand by many historians, named Habibullah, but called Baccha Saqqa, rose in the north. His following grew in volume and he was successful in occupying Kabul, from

where Amanullah fled to Kandhar. He made a last attempt to reconquer Kabul but failed on the way to Ghazni. He had no support and decided to leave for Rome by way of India. The Government of India provided him facilities to travel through the country and begin his exile in Europe. Habibullah proclaimed himself king and thus Afghanistan passed under a temporary reign of terror under a suspect ruler.

All these years Soviet diplomacy had operated to draw Afghanistan more and more within its orbit. From 1924 every effort was made to implement the terms of the Russo-Afghan treaty. Russians were employed in the Afghan air force, air service was established between Kabul and Tashkand, and proposal was made for a State Bank. In 1925, on the question of the ownership of an Oxus island, Urta-tagai, however, this friendliness was momentarily befogged, but the Russians gave the island to the Afghans and amity was re-established. At this drawing closer of Kabul and Moscow the British could not feel happy for if it progressed further the entire edifice of British-Indian foreign policy would crumble down. The relations between Delhi and Kabul were, at the same time, according to Tytler, "showing signs of strain, due to the unending aggravations of tribal affairs". In 1926 the Afghans went so far as to protest formally in London against the 'forward policy', in an endeavour to show that deliberate efforts were being made by the Government of India "to thwart the efforts of the Afghan Government to transform neighbourly relations into sincere and friendly ones". After the Russian Revolution, British attitude towards the Soviet Union was one of acute unfriendliness, and the latter's success in carving out communist republics in Central Asia and interest shown in Afghanistan reawakened feelings of alarm, and led to preparations of defence plans to counteract Russian aggressive designs with or without Afghan participation. Therefore British expression of neutrality in the internal chaos which overwhelmed Amanullah leading to his exit from the scene and their later support to Nadir Khan to enter his country through India, naturally led to the impression, as Tytler puts it, "that the fall of Amanullah had been deliberately brought about by the British Government and that Nadir Khan was their nominee". The General succeeded in ousting Habibullah, who was killed, and occupied

the throne of Kabul and was proclaimed king on 16 October 1929. To him the safety of his family then in Kabul was guaranteed by the British and he was allowed to recruit tribesmen from British zone to fight for him. He was recognised, king also by the Government of India and with him friendly relations were fully established, and assistance in arms and ammunition was given.

With Nadir Shah as ruler of Afghanistan, the attitude of the Government of India had altered towards that country, and in all calculations of danger to the security of India's frontier, Afghan friendliness was taken into account. In the Defence of India Plans prepared by the Indian army subsequent to 1930, it was presumed that in the event of Russian invasion towards India, Afghanistan would continue friendly to the British. Nadir Shah also remained steadfast to British friendship. He plunged into schemes of reform which gradually resulted in the relative westernisation of the country. When Nadir Shah died his son Zahir Shah ascended the throne without opposition. The new ruler also maintained his sympathy towards India. He further stabilised the government and retained the position of neutrality and friendliness with all in his foreign policy. The Second World War came during his reign. In their appreciations for defence plans, military authorities in India assumed the cooperation of Afghanistan in resisting aggression whether from the Soviet Union, in the early phases of the war, or the Nazi Germany later. The defence of India was considered to be closely integrated with the defence of Afghanistan. Thus right up to the end of war, the state remained friendly and the policy of the Government of India was to use its friendship and neutrality to keep danger of war from its frontiers. The ruler of Kabul was not bound any obligations of subservience. The Secretary of State for India, in 1940, outlined the policy of his government in these words, "A strong, stable and friendly Afghan administration has always been a British interest, and never more so perhaps than it is today, and if in the past we sought to secure our interests by a measure of control over and by granting subsidies to the Government of that country, we have now recognised the advantages of securing them through the agency of a stable, friendly and independent kingdom; . . . That there is a power-

ful bond of common interest between India and Afghanistan must be apparent to anyone who considers the geographical, the political, and the economic circumstances of two countries". Till the end of British rule in India in 1947 this policy continued. After Independence and the creation of an independent, but hostile, Pakistan, for the free Government of India friendship with a stable Afghanistan is of permanent strategic importance and it has been so maintained.

### **Persian Gulf and Iran**

Another region significant for the defence of India lies to its west, 'comprising the land block of Iran and Arab West Asia and the coast of the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf. The British grew conscious of its strategic value very early in their adventure of empire building in India and other parts of South Asia. The approach of European powers to India had been through the sea route skirting the coastline of Africa, hence maritime supremacy in this region was essential for the stability of British Empire in this part of the world. The French alone survived as the competitors of the British for trade and empire in India and, with Mauritius in their possession, they had posed a serious threat to the naval supremacy of the British and their trade in the eighteenth century. The French friendship with Tipu of Mysore and impending invasion of the east by Napoleon Bonaparte when his forces swooped on Egypt awakened the desire in Great Britain in their self-defence, to block the ingress of the French armies into the oceanic hinterland of India's defence. For the security of the Indian Ocean therefore they took over possession of the Cape of Good Hope and the southern coast of Africa along with Mauritius Island in the west and Ceylon, Java, Penang and other stations on the Malayan coast in the east. On the western side, to the north Mauritius, on the coastline of the Indian Ocean lay the principality of Zanzibar and Muscat, the ruler of which commanded the coastal region of eastern Africa and southern Arabia. With him the British entered into treaty relationship both for the purpose of commerce and to protect the lines of communication between India and England. The Treaty of 1798 which was ratified in 1800 with Muscat



provided for the complete exclusion of French trade and influence from that state. A political agent was also established there. Friendly relations thus begun continued to grow and be firm in subsequent decades. In the reign of Saiyid Said, the relations were very cordial and he was afforded help and protection when Wahabi threat mounted on his borders. The Government of India also acted as custodian of the bequest partitioning the kingdom between his two sons, and had to intervene later in case of disputed succession and for due payment of subsidy by the Chief of Zanzibar to his kin, the ruler of Muscat. In the matter of disputed succession both Lawrence and Mayo repeated the principle of non-intervention adopted rigidly in Afghanistan, and gave de facto recognition to the prince who had succeeded in gaining allegiance of the tribes for the time being. Only when there was danger of French intervention, when a Dutch corvette and a French gunboat visited Muscat after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, did Mayo adopt a more positive attitude. He did not favour postponement of recognition to Turki who had succeeded to power on the assassination of Azan. Not only did he disavour withholding of recognition to the new ruler but was prepared to countenance his endeavours "to recover by force of arms the outlying possessions of Muscat". Turki was informed that he would be "quite at liberty to do so, and that there is no longer any necessity for maintaining so rigidly as heretofore the prohibition of warlike operations" imposed by the British in the early years of the nineteenth century to maintain peace in the Persian Gulf region. In 1871 the Government of India defined its policy again when it wrote to the Secretary of State for India that "we are no doubt very materially interested in the preservation of peace of these waters. If disturbances broke out, it might be difficult to prevent their spreading to the Persian Gulf. It has therefore been long our policy to exert our legitimate influence to preserve the peace on the coasts of Oman". British interest in Muscat and their policy towards it were symbolic of their diplomatic relations with the chiefships in the Persian Gulf area.

British commerce had penetrated into the shores of the Persian Gulf in the eighteenth century without their acquiring political control over that region. But in the

early years of the next century, danger of French intrusion piratical attacks had compelled the Government of India to enter into treaty relations with not only Muscat and Persia, but also the petty chiefs of the coastal areas, which made the British pre-eminently responsible for maintaining maritime peace there. Apart from piracy which interfered with trade and highly profitable pearl fishing, two dangers emerged at the time to meddle with British commercial monopoly. One was the rapid expansion of Wahabism implying supremacy of Nejd over the outlying small independent Arab principalities; and the second was the Turkish attempt to extend their empire over the Arabs and make it a reality too. Even the stagnant Persian empire also stirred itself occasionally to assert its imperial claims over the Persian Gulf region. Another threat arose from the Russian warm-water policy, seeking an outlet into the waters of Persian Gulf for their landlocked empire. Engagements made with Muscat and other states between 1800 and 1820 imposing truce on the region and interdict on naval warfare among the chiefs, were an answer to the dangers inherent in the situation of Western Asia. Next to Muscat a treaty was made in 1806 with the Jowasmi tribe, whose chiefs did not, however, desist from piratical activities till crushed in 1819 and a general treaty being signed in 1820 with the coastal Shaikhs, binding them to desist from piracy. Next step was taken in 1835 when the Shaikhs of the southern coast agreed to observe a truce "during the pearling season not merely to abstain from piracy but to avoid all hostilities by sea". This stipulation was renewed in 1843 for ten years and then developed into a perpetual treaty. It became a convention, well-established, throughout the Persian, Gulf region, that no warlike movements would be conducted on the waters of the Gulf and the British Government was the custodian of the inviolability of the seas. By this means, and because of the presence of their navy, the British were able to extend their protectorate over the Persian Gulf which had for its basis the unacknowledged right to determine and control the foreign policy and inter-state relations of the Trucial and other chiefs, on the system developed in the Native States of India'. But the Government of India had no right or obligation to interfere in their internal affairs, and it

is problematical whether the relations of the chiefs with Nejd, Persia or Turkey would be subject to British control. Yet the British did not abstain from meddling with these as well. 'Peace and security of the region, protection of British subjects and their trade and ultimate British supremacy in these waters', safeguarded by the presence of British might there, 'were the justifications of this policy'.

Another instance of the application of these principles was the attitude of the Government of India towards the island of Bahrein. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century it had been in direct relationship with the British and had been part of the territories subject to the Truce governing maritime peace. In 1861 again, a fresh treaty of friendship was contracted by which the Chief of Bahrein agreed to abstain from all maritime aggression, war or piracy by sea, and in return he was to be afforded protection. The Government of India rigidly enforced this obligation, and when the Chief indulged in acts of aggression against Gwadar, he was deposed and his brother Ali established as ruler in his place. Soon a fresh outrage developed resulting in the murder of both the brothers by Nasir and the Government of India employed force to oust the usurper and restore the island to the son of Ali. No change was made in its status and the state was considered to be independent over which the suzerainty of Persia and Turkey was not accepted when they asserted their sovereignty over it in 1870. The stand of the Government of India was that the chiefships in the Persian Gulf were independent states, not subject to Persia, Turkey, Wahabis or the British, which had entered into treaties with the Indian government for the preservation of maritime peace in the area. Its position was expressed as that "protectorate in the Gulf is a matter of obligation rather than of right; that we have pledged ourselves to the Arab chiefs, who are parties to the maritime peace to watch over the peace of the Gulf, to put down aggressions by sea, and to take to all necessary steps for the reparation of injuries inflicted on them; and that from these obligations we cannot in good faith recede". When after 1870, the Turkish empire laid claims to suzerainty over the whole of Arabia including the coasts and waters of the Persian Gulf, on one side, and Yemen on the other, the Government of India repudiated then on the ground that these were

in conflict with British interests or the existing agreements with the local chiefs. Commerce, maritime peace and rights derived from treaties were the determinants in the validity or otherwise of Turkish claims, and the policy of the Government of India was to acknowledge the states within its jurisdiction as being independent and thus not subject to Turkish suzerainty. Turkey was not permitted to use the waters for leading an armed expedition against the ruler of Nejd. Exclusion of foreign influence whether of Persia, Turkey or any European power was the basic element in British policy, and it was adhered to throughout the nineteenth century.

About the same time the Turkish empire advanced its claims of sovereignty over the Arab chiefships of Yemen on the Red Sea coast, close to Aden which had been taken over by the British in the thirties of the nineteenth century, owing to its strategic importance guarding the waterways of the Arabian and Red Seas. With the opening of the Suez Canal its strategic and commercial significance had greatly increased, and the Resident there also controlled nine states over which British protectorate had been extended and which could not be permitted to fall under any foreign influence, Turkish or European. Thus when Turkey called upon the Sultan of Lahej, one of the nine states, to yield allegiance to it, the Government of India repudiated the right of Turkey to incorporate the states in the vicinity of British possessions within its dominions. Its policy was clearly enunciated then when the Foreign Secretary wrote, "it is very clear that we cannot allow the proceedings of the Turks to interfere with our Treaty relations with tribes. So long as they steer clear of the Chiefs with whom we have Treaties, I do not think it matters much what the Turks do in Yemen; but when they attempt to establish their authority over Chiefs with whom we have formed relations, as with independent powers, it is time to cry halt". And in 1873 the Porte was informed of the special position of the British in the region of Aden. The protectorate over the Arab chiefs, whether on the Red Sea, Arabian Sea coast, or the Persian Gulf, extended in so far as their external relations were controlled and their defence was guaranteed. The position was analogous to that of paramountcy in relation to Indian states, and the Arab Chiefs were "required

to abstain from political intercourse with foreign powers without the consent of the British Government, and to refer all disputes with each other to that Government for settlement"; while the Government of India, on its part, "engaged to defend them against unprovoked aggression by foreign powers". In Lytton's time this status was fully recognised and formalised by preventing Turkey to assert its control over the Arab Chiefs. In 1879, proposals were put forth which involved the recognition of "the Trucial Chiefs as being wholly subordinate, and not only in respect to their maritime proceedings, to the British Government". It was suggested that "at some future time it might be politically advisable to amalgamate all these petty Chiefs with Muscat, to assign the Sultan of Muscat the position of a feudatory chief with jurisdiction as far as the Turkish boundary, and in return for this extension of territory, to take from him a tributary contribution towards the maintenance of the Naval Squadron in the Persian Gulf". Even revision of agreement was advised having as its purpose "the recognition of the British Government as the Paramount power". It was not, however, immediately effected; but the position was clear that the Government of India asserted its right of paramountcy over these Arab Chiefships, and thereby controlled the waters of the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea, upto the eastern coast of Africa, for the defence of India.

Intimately related to the security of the route of India was the position of the Turkish empire and her attitude towards the British. The Turks commanded the eastern Mediterranean, and, early in the nineteenth century, their empire encompassed the territories of Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, from Nile to the mouth of Euphrates, and laid claims of suzerainty over the Arab lands. As such it lay athwart the route leading from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea, a region of greatest strategic significance to the British empire in the east. Even prior to the opening of the Suez Canal the British had used the overland passage from Suez to Alexandria, and with the construction of the canal, their principal route lay through Suez and the Red Sea. Turkish empire exhibited symptoms of crumbling early in the last century, which was aggravated by the ambitions of the Pasha of Egypt.

Muhammad Ali, whose designs were to carve out an independent kingdom in Egypt and wresting the Syrian and other Arab lands from Turkish domination. An Arab state was what he wanted to create. To counteract his schemes of expansion it was feared the Sultan might court Russian support. In 1832, Russian fleet was in the Bosphorus from where it dominated Constantinople and compelled the Sultan of Turkey to accept the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi in 1833, by which provision was made for mutual defence in case of aggression, and Russia undertook to furnish naval and military assistance in case of need. By a secret article the Sultan agreed to close the Dardenelles to armed vessels of any power. To the British this agreement was most unpalatable, as it involved the complete subservience of the Sultan to Russia, and the eventual loss of their control over the eastern Mediterranean. This danger quickened their resolve to bring Turkey within their diplomatic embrace and bypass Egyptian route by developing an alternate route from Alexandrettea in Syria to Basra on the Persian Gulf. Palmerston declared on 11 July 1833. "It is of the utmost importance for the interest of England, and for the maintenance of peace in Europe, that the territories and provinces forming the Ottoman empire should be an independent state...undoubtedly government would feel it to be their duty to resist to the utmost any attempt on the part of Russia to partition the Turkish empire...The integrity and independence of the Ottoman empire are necessary to the maintenance of the tranquillity, the liberty and the balance of power in the rest of Europe." This remained the basic stand of the British empire throughout the nineteenth century. Their entry into the Crimean War was motivated by this instinct to preserve the Turkish empire as their protege, whose alliance and subservience were necessary for their imperial interests.

During the crisis occasioned by the ambitions of Muhammad Ali, the British government was led to seek a safe alternative route to the east, besides preserving the integrity of Turkey as "the occupier of the road to India." This route was to lie through Syria and Mesopotamia for which in 1834 an "exploratory expedition was fitted out under General Chesney" and funds were voted for the purpose both by the British government and the East India Company. The idea was to link the Syrian

port of Alexandretta with the Persian Gulf "by rail and water communications". Little came out of this early enterprise beyond making the British conscious of the supreme importance of the Arab region and the Persian Gulf for the security of India and the possible danger of Russian and French competition in acquiring hold over this territory. Particularly serious was the Russian aspiration for acquiring a warm water port on the Persian Gulf and intruding into Mesopotamia through their occupation of Georgia and Armenia. The British schemes of railway construction, which were revived from time to time, were not pursued to fruition. Subsequent to Chesney's exploration, after 1860 again plans were made for a Euphrates railway and to seek concessions from the Sultan for constructing railways in Asian Turkey. At the same time in Persia also railways were planned to develop, and Baron Reuter had obtained a concession from the Shah to build railway lines between Tehran and a port on the Persian Gulf as also one connecting Tehran with the Turkish frontier and the projected railway system in that empire. Even plans were mooted for having a railway line between Karachi and Basra. All these projects were intended to bring India nearer to England by overland route, both for commercial and strategic reasons. But the basic motive was to keep Russia out of this region and also provide major bases to counteract aggression from that quarter. British intervention in the Russo-Turkish conflict in 1877-78 was also motivated by the same reason. Later when the Germans acquired the right to build the Bagdad railway which would connect Berlin with the Persian Gulf. British-Indian fears of the entry of a serious, militarily strong, rival in this region of immense strategic significance were revived. Every endeavour was made to scuttle the railway scheme, and British opposition was withdrawn only when the Germans consented to leave the portion between Bagdad and the Persian Gulf, possible Basra or Kuwait as rail-head, to the British. The intrusion of German rivalry in commerce and economic exploitation of Mesopotamia occasioned departure from the policy of supporting Turkish Sultan, and encouraging Arab disaffection against him and the eventual breakup of the Turkish empire in West Asia by the settlement after the Great War of 1914-18, in which the British and the Turks were ranged on opposite sides. In

the Second World War also forces were sent to Basra to eject Nazi influence. The entire region including Persia was under occupation by Indian forces during the period of the war. Thus was exhibited the interest of the British-Indian governments in the region of the Persian Gulf and its Arab hinterland, which had to be protected from passing under Russian, French or German control.

## IRAN

Same was the case with Persia, now called Iran, with which state Indian governments over centuries had maintained intimate relations of friendliness, occasionally disturbed by misunderstandings verging on hostility. The British grew conscious of its importance in their plan of defence of their imperial possessions in India when Napoleon launched his adventure of eastern conquests. To counteract the French danger, which assumed greater poignancy when the Russian Czar joined Napoleon after Tilsit, the British-Indian governments despatched missions to Tehran to court the help of the Shah in containing the invasion from the west. The Indian emissary Malcolm did not meet with success and in his discomfiture sought naval action to intimidate the ruler of Persia. This extreme step was not countenanced by his employers ; however the British agent had more luck and he arranged a treaty in 1814 by which mutual support was agreed to and the British engaged to train his army and afford him help when threatened by Russia. A British embassy was established in Tehran. The Calcutta government had little hand in the Persian affairs, but its interest did not abate as India's protection was involved. This flirtation had an early termination when the British failed to render help to the Persian government in the hour of its crisis brought about by Russian invasion and consequent loss of territory and humiliation. The result was that Persia soon drifted into the Russian camp. For many decades the Shah continued to play to the tune of his allies who stimulated his ambitions of the conquest of Herat, Kalat and Kandahar. The Indian government was naturally alarmed at this hostile combination mounting aggression so close to its frontier and on the routes leading to its



strategic points. Two Persian invasions of Herat made the Government of India acutely conscious of threat and made it cling to Afghanistan for Indian security. On both these occasions the danger was averted by adopting the strategem of naval demonstration in the Persian waters. To counteract the Persian threat the British not only retained full control over the Persian Gulf but also made use of Afghanistan and Kalat to operate as shields against Russo-Persian bellicosity. Till 1857 when the Treaty of Paris was signed, making the British arbiters in the disputes between Persia and Afghanistan, a state of tension prevailed in the Indo-Persian relationship. Article VI of that Treaty definitely laid down that "in case of difference arising between the Government of Persia and the countries of Herat and Afghanistan, the Persian Government engage to refer them for adjustment to the friendly offices of the British Government and not to take up arms unless these friendly offices fail of effort. The British Government on their part engage at all times, to exert their influence with the states of Afghanistan to prevent any cause of umbrage being given by them or by any of them to the Persian Government; and the British Government, when appealed to by the Persian Government in the event of difficulties arising, will use their best endeavours to compose such differences in a manner just and honourable to Persia."

Occasion soon arose to put into effect this provision of the treaty. Seistan, lying on the north-eastern frontier of Persia and continuous to the territories of Afghanistan, became a bone of contention between the two states. Persian ambitions, which had the support of Russia, led to steady advance of her armed intervention in the territory of Seistan, claimed by Afghan ruler and owing allegiance to him, during the period of civil war in Kabul. Sher Ali protested against this encroachment and might have taken up arms to substantiate his claim, but desisted from violent action in deference to the wishes of Mayo explained at the Ambala Conference in 1869. Persia also was not prepared to assert its rights by resort to force, and appealed to the treaty stipulations for adjustment of the dispute. The British Government, thereupon, with full consent of the Government of India, appointed Goldsmid to arbitrate in the border settlement which was made in 1871 and

which failed to satisfy the Amir as it was based on partition of the province of Seistan. At the same time Persian government was steadily advancing upon Kalat, a state in Baluchistan, whose Khan had entered into treaty relations with the Government of India owning its supremacy. By the treaty of 1842 the Indian government had engaged in case of attack "by an open enemy or any difference arising between him (Khan) and any foreign power to afford him assistance or good offices as it may judge to be necessary or proper for maintenance of his rights." This relationship was further cemented in 1854 when the Khan relinquished his right to enter into negotiations with any state without the consent of the Government of India, and agreed to the stationing of British troops or possible occupation by troops of portions of his territory. The Khan had lost the attributes of sovereignty in respect of his external relations but had gained the advantage of securing British aid against aggression on his territories, including Makran which bordered on Persian kingdom and obtruded within it. This involved effective aid to Kalat to resist Persian encroachments on his territory which began in 1869 when the ruler of Banpur, under directions from the Shah of Persia, advanced in force into Makran and laid claim to the territories of Kedj, Gwadur and Charbar. A situation thus arose prompting British interference in the dispute for, despite friendly relations with Persia, they could not leave Kalat to its fate which would have destroyed the dependent buffer and brought a foreign state, none too friendly and not at all subordinate, on the western frontiers of India. While policy and interest demanded all efforts to wean away Persia from Russian influence, and did not justify war with it, the need for India's security required that Persia should not be "allowed to encroach step by step on the independent or semi-independent states between her frontiers and ours." The British Foreign Office made it absolutely explicit that the British Government could not remain indifferent to the developments in Kalat. The Shah agreed that the boundary between the two was undefined and sought arbitration in the dispute. Goldsmid took up this matter also and the Makran boundary was settled in 1871.

As in Afghanistan so also in Persia the pressing problem was to combat the fast growing Russian infiltration into that kingdom

where in the last quarter of the nineteenth century the government of the Czar was seeking concessions to build railways and exploit the natural resources of that country. Russia had no easy access to the seas which might facilitate its commerce and help development of industries. The southern coast of Persia offered scope for a warm-water port, and towards this end the Russian government was steadily proceeding. Entry into the Persian Gulf by the route of Mesopotamia had been opposed by the British. An alternative was to penetrate through Khorasan and Seistan to the Makran coast and establish a port there close to Indian coastline. In the nineties danger to Seistan grew immense and impelled the Government of India to contemplate measures to counteract it. At the time, it was believed the political structure of Persia was fast crumbling. In the view of the Government of India, as expressed in 1899, "the Persian Government appears well nigh to have exhausted all power of recuperation and reform; and that the country, but feebly held together by any tie either of race, religion or loyalty, it only saved from a fate to which it must otherwise have long ago succumbed, partly by a superficial vitality... still more by the rival ambitions of the two great European Powers between whom its territories are placed, and who are the real arbiters of its destiny". Further it wrote, "The rule of the present Shah is distinctly and uniformly weaker than that of his predecessors. The dissolvent agencies at work in the Persian kingdom are more active and persistent. Meanwhile the encroachments of Russian power are steadfastly pursued and are less veiled by any pretence of concealment. Other Governments and nationalities...are appearing on the scene; and there is every reason to believe that, as in the case of the Ottoman Empire and of China, so also here, the property of the sick man,...is likely to be subject of bitter contention between the various parties who may demand to be included among his heirs."

In this context it may be pertinent to examine British-Indian interests in Persia and the aims there. In 1899, these were judged to be "commercial, political, strategical and telegraphic." India's trade with the eastern and southern parts of Persia was not insignificant in its magnitude and had tremendous potentialities of growth. But apart from com-

merce, the Indian government was more concerned with the strategic importance of Persia to it. Beginning with the grim prospect of impending French invasion at the commencement of the last century, apprehension of trouble recurred at intervals. The Governor-General in Council, in 1899, appreciated the danger to be serious and wrote, "Now that the boundaries of Afganistan. which have been demarcated and guaranteed by Great Britain, march for many hundreds of miles with those of Persia; that Persian territory is also coterminous for hundreds of miles with Baluchistan, a state under British Protectorate.....; and that the sea which washes the southern coasts of Persia is one in which.....Indian interests and influence have become supreme—it is clear that Persia has assumed a strategical importance in relation to British India, which might not be serious, were the resources or the designs of that country itself alone to be considered; but which is indisputably great, when it is remembered that closely pressing upon Persia and Afghanistan is the ever-growing momentum of a power whose interests in Asia are not always in accord with our own, and that the Persian Gulf is beginning to attract the interest of other and sometimes rival nations." Apart from the general strategic consideration, it was Seistan which excited both British cupidity and apprehensions. Curzon, in his Minute of 4 September 1899, reviewed the various steps taken to impress British interest in that region, and arrived at the conclusion that Seistan, "by virtue of its position and its features, is, an object of much interest both to Russian and Great Britain. Situated at the point of junction of the frontiers of Persia, Afghanistan and Baluchistan, its future affects the destinies of all three countries". He highlighted its importance for the defence of the Kandahar-Herat line and the Helmand Valley apart from its being a possible granary, "either to a Power engaged upon a forward advance, or to the Power interested in commercial and industrial expansion." Hence British-Indian interests had a vital stake in Seistan, which was then facing danger of Russian infiltration which if unresisted might affect them most adversely. Curzon, therefore, asserted the opinion that "If we do not desire Russia to advance to the Persian Gulf, the obvious method is to block most direct of her paths. Looking to the future of Northern Khorasan, which

is inevitably destined to pass under Russian control, it should be our object to draw the line of demarcation between the Russian and the British spheres at the point best suited to our interests and not to hers." In this suggestion lay the germs of the division of spheres of interest and influence in Persia which materialised in 1907 by the Anglo-Russian Convention.

In 1901 again the problem arose in all its intensity. The Russian government had begun negotiations with Persia for a fresh loan and a new commercial treaty, besides project for the construction of a railway from Ashkabad to Meshed and too apparent presence in Seistan. These measures naturally were considered by the Government of India as detrimental to British trade and Indian commercial and political interests. In its view "all of the circumstances illustrate the rapidity with which the weakness of Persia is being turned to account by her powerful neighbour, while they also testify to the unswerving purpose with which the policy of the Russian Government is directed to an obvious and unmistakable goal"—the acquisition of a warm water port in the Indian Ocean. The Governor-General in Council believed that "the question of Persia and the Persian Gulf is on the verge of becoming the most critical issue of Central Asian politics". In this context they reiterated the principle that "in Southern Persia and the Persian Gulf British influence should remain supreme ; and that while at no time could the commercial competition of other Powers be reasonably resented or legitimately opposed, yet the creation of rival political interests in that quarter could not be permitted, without seriously compromising the interests of India", as "acquisition of political interests or right by the Russian Government in those quarters would be fraught with positive danger to the security of the Indian Empire." Lord Curzon, in his minute of 28 October 1901, examined the implications of the railway concessions sought by Russia and exposed the dangers which Indian defence faced by their consummation. According to him the establishment of Russian political influence in Seistan and south-eastern Persia would ultimately culminate in the surrounding of India in a ring-fence by Russia and its ally France from west to east, Persian Gulf to Siam, "and the Indian empire along the complete length of its land frontier will be coterminous with the terri-

tories and confronted with the ambitions, of Powers whose interests are on the whole inimical to its own." Curzon's tour of the Persian Gulf region was a step taken to exclude hostile interests from that area. Partition of Persia into spheres of interest between Great Britain and Russia, leaving its south and east to the British influence was also hinted at. However, no definite action was taken at the time to alienate Russia, while in Europe, owing to the growing threat of German expansion in West Asia, an entente between France and Great Britain was brought about in 1904, within which Russia was also drawn in 1907, the Convention recognising sole interest of Great Britain in southern Persia. This agreement eliminated Russian fear for many years and with the revolution in Persia leading to the emergence of Raza Shah as its ruler, the state shook off its weakness. But during the Second World War Fascist influence infiltrated into the state and British-Indian and Russian occupation forces kept control over the country for many years. Thus was the strategic interest of guarding the western border of India expressed over nearly one hundred and fifty years, and Iran and the states bordering on the Persian Gulf protected from falling under hostile influence of the European rival powers of the British.

## *Imperialism Active in the East and North*

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The process of imperialism in the east and north was not unlike that in the north-west and west. Economic advantage and elimination of rival European powers from the vicinity of India were the twin motives here also. France and Russia were active in the east and north, respectively, acquiring commercial privileges, establishing spheres of influence or extending territorial possessions. The British could not acquiesce in their presence so close to the frontiers of India, and endeavoured to erect a wall of dependent states to keep off the danger of contact with these hostile imperialisms. Besides, instinct of commercial gain also prompted their interference in the neighbouring states where the British desired to establish their suzerainty and thereby ensure profits for their own nationals. Burma, Nepal and Tibet were three such states which had to suffer from the ambitions of the British.

### **BURMA**

We may begin with Burma which attracted British attention even in the seventeenth century owing to its trade potential. Though the East Indian Company was not ready to establish formal commercial relations with the Burmese, private traders resorted to that country, built a factory at Syriam and traded in timber and some other articles. The people and rulers of Burma were, at the same time, keen for contact with the foreigners whose arms and ammunition

were in demand there to gain an edge in the wars which were endemic in the country. They were not happy with the presence of English, French or Dutch adventurers, who were plotting territorial possessions there, but wanted official contact with the governments of these foreigners. The middle of the eighteenth century was a period of political turmoil in Burma also, where a strong wave of opposition was mounting against Pegu government headed by a powerful military commander Alaungpaya who brought the whole country under his rule which he established with Ava as his capital. The new ruler was also eager to possess European cannon and gun ammunition not only to defeat all opposition internally but also to expand his empire to the east and west of his dominion. That was the period of intense rivalry between England and France in south Asia. The French frequently used the Burmese coast and its ports for launching attacks on English shipping in the Bay of Bengal and even threatening British possessions on the Indian coastline. The British, on their part, were eager to exploit Burmese teak for their ship-building activities, monopolise its rich resources for their commerce and sweep away their European rivals from their havens of refuge on the coast of Burma. These motives reawakened interest in Burma which had lain dormant for many decades since the burning of their factory at Syriam by the Mons in the early eighteenth century. On the report of Captain Taylor, the Governor of Madras, under instructions from the Court of Directors, sent a British agent to persuade the Pegu court to cede Negrais, which when refused, was forcibly occupied in 1753; but this enterprise proved a dismal failure. Meanwhile Alaungpaya had reached Bassein and sent emissaries in March 1755 to Negrais seeking arms and even troops to win his wars. The Madras government was unable to spare any aid because of the impending war with France. This opportunity was lost for ever when Alaungpaya occupied Pegu and became undisputed ruler of the country. Nonetheless, he was prepared to grant the trading privileges and give formal recognition to Company's settlements including Negrais. He conveyed these concessions in a letter inscribed on gold-leaf studded with rubies addressed to the ruler of England. No response forthcoming from the British monarch, and the ruler of Burma not being willing to establish



relations with a mere trading Company's local officials, Alaungpaya grew averse to British presence in his kingdom, and in 1759 massacred the settlement at Negrais, which was evacuated by the British. No recreminatory action was taken by the British and for many years no contacts were there between them and the Burmese.

Fresh activity is noticeable in the last decade of the eighteenth century. By that time the new Burmese ruling dynasty had been firmly established and had conquered Arakan and planned to expand the kingdom by annexing Siam, in the east, and the territories to the east of Bengal, in the west. The presence of a powerful, aggressive state in close vicinity to British dominions in India was naturally fraught with chances of conflict. But for many years it was evaded though occasions did arise which could lead to a state of war. The British in India were not free from internal dangers to concentrate on the events in Burma, and the Burmese did not feel strong enough to measure strength with the rulers of Bengal. Meanwhile a state of continuous hostility with France, from the beginning of the war of American independence to the close of the Napoleonic era, had prompted the British in Bengal to suspect French intrigues in Ava and Burmese countenance to their preparations for invasion of India from their ports. Fortunately for the British the French were unable to execute their plans and gradually this danger had eliminated itself. For some time, however, Bussy and Suffren had used Burmese ports for refitting their navy, and French privateers had preyed on English commerce from the ports of Rangoon and Mergui. Their plans to establish their bases on Burmese coast did not materialise in the circumstances of ennui of the decrepit French monarchy. Therefore no action was taken by the British to counteract the possible French danger, and conflict with Burma was avoided. But the Burmese conquest of Arakan by 1785 had created occasions for conflict and for many years the problem of border security in that direction had influenced British policy. The Mag inhabitants of Arakan were not reconciled to their subjection to Ava and a large population had migrated to the Chittagong district of Bengal. They were settled by the British authorities on land there. But

many of them from their security behind the Bengal border mounted frequent raids into Arakan and plundered the country and created serious problems of security for the government of Burma. In pursuit of these raiders, the Burmese army, ignorant of the niceties of international convention, sometimes intruded into the British territory and demanded surrender of the offenders. For nearly two decades such happenings muddled the relations between Bengal and Burma and brought them to the brink of war. An early incident was that of 1794 when a Burmese force crossed the boundary river of Naaf and demanded the surrender of Apolung and other fugitives. To deal with them a force was sent under Lieutenant Colonel Erskine, who, it appears, was not prepared to resort to arms, but accepted to yield the offenders on the promise that they would get a fair trial before being punished. There was rumour of Burmese invasion of Bengal in 1795, which did not come about, and Erskine's proposals for strengthening the frontier defence were not given effect to.

Owing to a state of continuous war between France and England in Europe, the French were keen to seek Burmese alliance and support for their plans of invading British possessions in India with Burmese ports as their naval bases. French ships used to visit Burma, which excited the jealousy and fear of the British in Bengal. To meet this threat, three embassies were sent by Shore and Wellesley in the next few years. The first one was conducted by Symes, whose report was favourable to the Burmans and who had been successful in piercing the hauteur of the ruler there and gain some trade concessions. Symes was charged with the mission to remove all causes of distrust and obtain all possible information of the products, manufactures, extent, trade, government and nature of the country. He was to seek permission for trade in teak, silver, lac, wax and elephant teeth, as well as deprive the French of the use of Burmese harbours. Another matter which engaged his attention was that of Arakan refugees. Regular and free communication, removal of all obstacle to trade and expulsion of Frenchmen, were the three main purposes for which he was despatched. Symes was successful in obtaining the king's permission for free movement of British merchants, removal of inland customs duty when import duty had been paid and

purchase and transport of timber on payment of 5 per cent duty at Rangoon. These regulations were liberal and should have been satisfactory. Permission was also granted for an English Resident at Rangoon, and Cox was sent in 1796 to function as such. But Cox, largely owing to his sticking to prestige and inflated sense of honour, failed to gain any success and had to suffer humiliation at the capital where he was not permitted to seek Royal audience. He returned to Calcutta and made an adverse report on the situation in Burma and disposition of its ruler towards the British. Perhaps his treatment had prejudiced him, but Bannerji in his book 'Eastern Frontier of British India' is inclined to give greater credence to his observations and has extolled his political insight as gleaned from Cox's remark that, "A firm and solid alliance with this nation is absolutely necessary for the security of your Eastern dominions, for if they do not acquire a right to protect them, the French will be masters of the country in a very short time." The attempts by Wellesley to bring Burma under the system of subsidiary alliance were motivated by this advice. Symes was sent again, followed by Canning, and the hope was then entertained that in the event of disputed succession to the throne, the heir apparent, who had been sympathetic to the British, should be lent military support in lieu of subsidiary alliance treaty. But such an eventuality did not occur at the time, and both Symes and Canning were unable to gain any definite advantages or completely bar out the French from Burmese ports.

The French menace continued for few years more to abate in the year 1809. But relations between Bengal government and Burma were fast deteriorating because of the Arakan refugees and steady Burmese advance into Assam and the adjoining lands. The Arakanese had not accepted Burmese subjection and rebellions were frequent...One in 1794 had been cruelly suppressed. In 1798 there was another mass exodus from Arakan into Chittagong district headed by a chief Nga Than De who came with 10,000 followers. They were settled on land, but this called for retributory action by the Burmese Viceroy of Arakan who sent his forces across the Naaf demanding surrender of refugees. Wellesley refused to yield them on grounds of "humanity" and forbade further immigration.

But neither the stream of refugees ceased to flow in nor did raids stop into Arakan territory, though for the moment the presence of a strong border force brought relative peace. In 1811, however, trouble began again on a large scale. On the death of Nga Than De, his son Chin Pyan, commonly called King Bering by Englishmen, assumed headship of the refugees and commenced raids to regain his ancestral land near Maungdaw. His successes and offer to hold Arakan under British suzerainty led naturally to the suspicion in Burma that he was rendered help by the Bengal government, which sent Canning as envoy to Ava to assure the government there of British neutrality. It was, however, difficult to convince the Burmese as King Bering had made preparations over many months in British territory and he had seventeen pieces of artillery taken from their dockyard, ostensibly made over by Dr. McRae, the Civil Surgeon. Hence the suspicion of collusion and instigation by local British authorities, which could not be dispelled by Canning's sweet words and promise not to permit King Bering to enter Indian territory, if defeated. This assurance was not kept, for after his defeat he was not prevented from re-entering and his person was not surrendered to the Burmese. Reprisals in the shape of frontier outrages followed and fear was entertained in Calcutta that British merchants and Canning might be seized as hostages. Ships were sent for their evacuation. For three or four years the frontier remained disturbed owing to raids by King Bering and the encroachment by Burmese forces as reprisals. The rebel patriot died in 1815 and for some years there was no repetition of raids, but tension in Anglo-Burmese relations did not abate; and fresh causes of hostility were developing. Open conflict was avoided owing to British involvement with Maratha affairs and Burmese being busy extending their rule in Assam and its neighbouring territories. They continued to demand surrender of refugees, cession of border districts of Chittagong, Dacca, Murshidabad and made secret approaches to Indian princes for combined action against the British. Irruption of hostilities was feared but there was no definite move on the part of the Burmese which has been attributed by some to the defeat of the Marathas and unhindered establishment of British suzerainty in India, and the failure of the Burmese in Siam along with the death of king Bodawpaya in 1819.

Meanwhile events in Assam had brought the Burmese there and that kingdom, rent by internal feuds, was fast succumbing under their ruler. It has been mentioned in an earlier chapter how the dissensions for power between Purnanada, the Burha Gohain, and Badan Chandra, the Bar Phukan, and the struggle for succession to the throne, had prompted the various factions and contenders to seek foreign help. Badan Chandra first sought British aid but when it was refused he went to Ava and ultimately succeeded in gaining support of the Burmese army which invaded Assam in 1817. They defeated the Assamese army, placed Badan Chandra in power with Chandrakanta Singh as ruler and retired to their country. With the return of Burmese army, fresh internecine struggle broke out. Badan Chandra was assassinated, and Chandrakanta was driven out. Lord Hastings did not interest himself in these quarrels and adopted an attitude of neutrality. But the Burmese were again active and occupied Assam, driving the ruler to seek shelter in Bengal and the people to groan under atrocities. For the next few years Assamese refugees, secretly aided by the British, raided across the frontiers, but failed to make any impression on the Burmese authority which was well entrenched with the coming of Maha Bandula in 1822. This consolidation of their power in Assam created alarm in British circles. David Scott, the magistrate of Rangpur, called for "some permanent measures...for the security of the frontier and the country in the lower part of the Brahmaputra, Meghna and Ganges", as the situation had altered with the substitution of a warlike, and comparatively speaking, powerful government in the place of a feeble administration that has hitherto ruled Assam. Besides Assam, Cachar, Jaintia and Manipur were also menaced by Burmese aggression. In Manipur they had set up Marji Singh as its ruler in 1813, but offended at his absence at the coronation of the new ruler Bagiyadaw, the Burmese devastated the state, compelling the ruler to flee to Cachar, which was also ransacked and whose ruler also fled to Sylhet and sought British help. These developments so close to Bengal frontier awakened British fears of the growing power of Ava, and led to the establishment of their protectorate over Cachar and Jaintia and expulsion of Burmese army from there. The presence of a strong hostile force on Bengal frontier, demanding

cession of territory from the British, and rapidly consolidating itself in Assam and Manipur prompted the British Government to adopt military measures to oust the Burmese and make their frontiers secure.

The situation before actual war came in 1824, thus, was that the Burmese had conquered Assam and were poised aggressively on Manipur and Cachar, were conscious of their power and prepared to defeat the menace of refugee raids on Arakan clandestinely supported by the British. They had no great respect for the Europeans and strove to keep foreign merchants under proper control. The Ava government was keen to maintain the independence of their land and people, and had an unrealistic assessment of the strength of the British in India. In this attitude a certain arrogance and aggressiveness were inevitable. On the other side, with successful termination of Maratha War and the establishment of undisputed suzerainty over India upto the Satlaj, beyond which friendly Ranjit Singh held sway, the British had grown conscious of their power which made them less averse to expansion beyond the frontiers. French danger had been for the moment eliminated and Russian threat was not immediate. Within India no organised power was there to combat their sovereignty and the prospect of people expressing resentment of foreign domination was still remote. For the British Government in India, therefore, time was propitious for mending their frontiers, dissipating hostile tendencies beyond the borders and intruding their commercial imperialism in south-east Asia. The problem of the Arakan refugees provided them with a handle to beat the Burmese, and the events in Assam were prompting immediate interference to preserve the security of their frontiers and extend their empire to the natural frontiers. But the most important motive for encroachment in Burma was the protection of trade. Not only the interest of British merchants settled in Burma had to be safeguarded but that land was to be used to route their trade with China. There was also the imperativeness of making the Burmese sea coast free from possible intrusion by their European rivals. All these motives were operative in the time of Amherst, who was keen to exploit the circumstances to bend the Burmese to his will. War was at the corner and the British were prepared for it to secure their ends.

War with the British, it appears, had gripped the Burmese national mind and one may agree with Harvey in the statement, that "It was not the king who led the people but the people who led the king into war." There was, according to European contemporary observers, a firm conviction in Burma of their victory over the British who were "considered to be luxurious and effeminate, incapable of standing the fatigues of war." Maha Bandula, their commander-in-chief, had an exaggerated notion of his strength, and it is reported, had kept a chain coated with gold to bring the Governor-General of Bengal as captive to Ava; and the Court was itching for a trial of strength with the British. It is difficult to explain this psychosis for war unless it be that the Burmese felt that unless the British were checked in time their country would be faced with the danger of losing its independence. The Arakan affair, the secret support to Assamese refugees and active interposition in Cachar and Manipur, had probably convinced the Burmese of the warlike intentions and hostile designs of the British. Unless checkmated initially they would counter Burmese moves in the provinces held by them, and therefore enthusiasm was there for defeating the British before they might grow formidable and pose a threat to the very integrity of Burma. This may explain their secret contacts with Indian princes whose loyalty and friendliness to the British was equivocal. The Governor-General also was not averse to war at the time it came, for by 1822-23 all trouble within the country had been suppressed and his government was ready to crush the Burmese before they had rooted themselves firmly in Assam and Arakan. Otherwise the immediate occasion for war was rather flimsy and the cause not ponderous enough to hurl the states into bitter conflict of arms. War was declared on the issue of the possession of an uninhabited small island in the river Naaf, known as Shahpuri, which was used only for the purpose of catching elephants and whose proprietorship was not unquestionable. Elephant hunters were driven off from this island by the Burmese who kept their soldiers there for some time. In January 1823, again, when some Indian merchants carrying rice in a boat were fired upon, on their refusal to pay custom dues to the Burmese, the British placed a small sepoy force on the island for the protection of traffic on the river. The Gover-

nor of Arakan took objection to their presence on the island and asked for their removal which request was refused by the Governor-General who asserted claim of ownership. The Burmese in September attacked the island with a large force and killing three and wounding four sepoy drove the rest away from there. Subsequently the armed force in Chittagong was strengthened and the commander was instructed "to recover the possession of the island of Shahpuri and punish the aggressors by attacking and destroying their boats and military posts and equipments on the river Naaf and eventually pursuing them along the sea coast as far as the Arakan river and even to the fort of Arakan itself" so as "to teach the Burmese a salutary lesson for the future." But general action was postponed for the moment, and recovery of Shahpuri was demanded. The Burmese also were bent on retaining possession of the island, for the settlement of this issue was taken away from the jurisdiction of the local Arakan government and four ministers came from Ava with the avowed object of regaining the island with the use of force, if necessary. From November 1823 to the end of winter in 1824, there was thus confrontation of hostile forces on the river Naaf. At the same time clash of arms had occurred on the Cachar border which the British had taken under their protection. It was made evident to the Burmese that the British would resist their attempts to establish their rule in Assam, Cachar, Manipur and even in Arakan. Plans and preparations were being made for a general attack on the Burmese in the frontier areas. Shahpuri incident and concentration of Burmese troops at Mangdu and Lowadhung in Arakan, together with the arrest of some men of British Navy, had led Amherst "to take a very serious view of the situation" and he demanded action for expelling the Burmese from the island and the withdrawal of their forces from near the British frontier. Robertson, the Magistrate of Chittagong, perceived the situation as being "virtually at war with the empire of Ava", which was formally declared on 5th March 1824. In his proclamation, Amherst stated, that he had taken this step "for the safety of our subjects and the security of our districts, already seriously alarmed and injured by the approach of the Burmese armies." It was an anticipatory measure as "the national honour no less obviously requires that atonement



should be had for wrongs so want only inflicted and so insolently maintained, and the national interests equally demand that we should seek, by an appeal to arms, that security against future insult and aggression which the arrogance and grasping spirit of the Burmese Government have denied to friendly expostulation and remonstrance." The Burmese were taken by surprise as the Viceroy of Pegu had asked the British to refer their case to Maha Bandula "who had been appointed to regulate all state affairs in Arakan." It was too late for pacific resolution of the points in dispute and Amherst had cast the die in favour of war.

The action of the Governor-General was condemned by the British public and censured by the Court of Directors who were mainly concerned with the financial implications of the war. The Supreme Government defended its attitude on the ground of safeguarding "our honour, our interests, and the lives and properties of our subjects." They exaggerated the consequences of Burmese presence in Assam and Arakan which might lead to "slow and gradual encroachment" on Bengal territory. Hence any "temporizing policy would have resulted in serious loss of reputation in the eyes of all India; the insolence and audacity of the Burmese would have increased, and hostilities might have broken out at a time when we might have been engaged in other quarters, and the plans and measures of our opponent would have been more matured." Helplessness and inevitability have been very often the excuse of aggression, and in this instance it was employed with vigour. It must have been evident to the Governor-General that the Burmese military strength was no match to the victorious, highly disciplined British-Indian army equipped with modern weapons, and the resources of Burma could not equal those of India. He was intent on teaching the Burmese a lesson and thereby wrest rich concessions for British commerce. To a large extent he was prompted in the course he adopted by the exhortations of British merchants in Burma whose interest was the primary motive of war. The struggle was bound to be one-sided but for the advantages which nature had bestowed on their adversary. Dense jungle, inhospitable climate, heavy rain and swampy terrain all provided a natural defence to the Burmese and did help to prevent British advance initially.

War was conducted in four sectors, Cachar, Manipur, Arakan and Irrawaddy valley. Maha Bandula was killed in the engagement at Danubyu in Arakan and thereafter the Burmese suffered a rout everywhere. The first set back to the advancing British army in the rainy season was later compensated by their almost unhindered advance to Pegu and even upto Yandabo, not far from Ava, which compelled the government to sue for peace and sign the treaty called the Treaty of Yandabo on 24 February 1826. The British had succeeded in clearing Assam, Cachar, Manipur and Arakan of the Burmese forces, and with the help of their navy had moved up towards Amarpura in the north by controlling the whole of Lower Burma and Tennasserim. Their victory over the Burmese army was assured, and Amherst had, from the beginning, set his war aims as cession of Assam, Manipur, Arakan and Tennasserim and payment of a huge war indemnity of two crores of rupees by the Burmese government. He was also keen for the humiliation of the governor of Arakan. Ultimately when armistice was granted and peace terms were discussed, on the plea of poverty of the Burmese Court, Amhersts reduced the indemnity to one crore, without abating his demand about cession of territory. The treaty was based on these terms and ratified accordingly. Apart from territorial clauses one article of the treaty provided that "a commercial treaty, upon principles of reciprocal advantage will be entered into" by the two governments. Accordingly a few months later a commercial treaty was signed on 24 November 1826 which provided for mutual freedom of trade, freedom of movement for merchants in the two countries. The British vessels of upto fifty tons were exempted from payment of tonnage duties and port charges. There was also provision for exchange of envoys. These concessions merely formalised the existing British trade and obtained legal exemptions for British merchants and their merchandise. Thus 'national' interest of the British was secured at the cost of the honour of the Burmese and the finances of India. The victory would clearly dispel all claims of defending their national honour and security and would unequivocally make the Burma war one of sheer aggression, fought to safeguard the interests of British trade.

It appears the Treaty of Yandabo did not satisfy either

party and was merely a truce which brought hostilities to a stop. Naturally the Burmese ruler was not happy at the cession of vast territories and payment of a heavy indemnity. Loss of prestige and national honour were bound to rankle deep and leave behind an indelible scar. King Bagiydaw intensely felt the injury and was reported to be subject to fits of melancholy and insanity arising out of the shock of defeat. Hence the Court became 'more remote and self-absorbed' and grew more punctilious in the matter of etiquette relating to the reception of British envoy. The Ava government, at the same time, made endeavours for the restoration of Kabaw Valley and parts of Martaban as well as retrocession of Tennasserim. The terms of the treaty regarding cession of territory had reduced Burma to a land-locked country and cut it off from all outside contact. For many years afterwards, therefore, every attempt was made to regain some portion of the coast line. But the attitude of the Government of India was quite rigid in this respect for the British were in no mood to surrender their advantage. The British were not content with their gains and their merchants were clamouring for greater opportunities for profit which would ensue from the total lapse of Burmese independence. Trade was the most potent motive of British interference then. More commerce and larger consumption of British manufactures in that country was the most vocal demand. But no trade treaty was signed for many years thus frustrating British expectations for greater commerce. However, Major Burney, the second British envoy, reported vast increase in the importation of British goods since his residence in that country. Yet there was no secret about the sentiments of resentment and hostility among the members of the Court and the public. Burney reported that "the king and those about him are manifestly dissatisfied with the present state of things." Lord Bentinck observed "The very sound of the word treaty appears to have excited all the fears and suspicions of the Court of Ava." To remove this feeling of distrust he despatched Burney as an envoy, but the latter found the common people to be "very rancorous and sore against the English." He further wrote in 1837, "It is well known that nothing but dire necessity forced the late Government of Ava to agree to the Treaty of Yandabo, and that it always intended to take the first opport-

unity of releasing itself from the engagements it had so unwillingly entered into." Thus for them to want one more trial for the sake of letza-kya (revenge or taking satisfaction) is quite understandable. The accession of Tharawaddy in 1837 to the throne brought to a 'culmination' these feelings of hostility, and he is credited with making preparations for war. The English on their side were no less eager for a fresh resort to arms to extend the benefits of commerce to their compatriots and enlarge their dominion. Auckland had strengthened his armed forces and but for the Afghan War might have thrust them into the eastern land. Crawford, Burney, Benson and McLeod were sent as British envoys, but except for Burney all others had brief tenures and made little impression on the Court or people of Burma. Burney even transferred the embassy from Ava to Rangoon and after 1840 no envoy resided even there. Tension and estrangement were mounting which were aggravated by the clamours of British merchants in Burma and the suspiciousness of the king and ministers there. Tharawaddy died in 1846 and was succeeded by his son Pagan Min, whose reign was marked by massacres, persecutions and brigandage. The king spent his time in frivolous pursuits of pleasure while the administration was fast heading towards collapse. In these circumstances fresh causes of conflict arose which ended in a renewal of conflict and fresh loss of territory to Burma in 1852.

The immediate occasion for war was provided by the arrest of two British masters of merchant ships, Sheppard and Lewis, by the governor of Pegu, on charge of murdering pilots. The governor was reported to have extorted money from them. They complained to the government at Calcutta, where Dalhousie, now free from the wars in the Punjab and flushed with the pride of victory, was prepared to exploit this golden opportunity to squeeze the Burmese government into submission. He could not tolerate any slighting of British honour or stand in an attitude of inferiority. He was responsive to the clamorous demands of British merchants for the conquest of lower Burma which would enhance the prospects of their commerce and exploitation of the wealth of the country. Hence he claimed reparations as the arrest and trial of two British subjects was deemed as "obvious infraction of the Treaty by

the Burmese", though it did not give any rights of extra-territoriality and was absolutely silent on the point. The Governor-General put forth the plea that his government must protect British subjects from 'injustice, oppression and extortion.' Reparations to the extent of rupees 9948 were demanded and if the governor did not atone for his 'misconduct', the king was to disavow his acts and order his removal. The ruler yielded to the extent of recalling the governor and appointing another in his stead. But lack of information of the change was treated as an act of discourtesy by Lambert, the British agent in Rangoon, who was entrusted with dealing with the Burmese in this matter. Lambert sent his subordinate Edward to inform the new governor about the intended visit of his superior to the governor. The conduct of Edward was resented by the Burmese and the governor did not meet him on the plea of his being then sleeping. This was taken as a slight and Lambert ordered blockade of the port, burning of the king's ship and made strong protest to the king against the behaviour of the governor, who was meek enough to request Lambert to meet him. But the latter was adamant and demanded that the governor visit him on his frigate and express regret. It was a step to humble the Burmese representative in the eyes of his people and exhibit the superiority of the British. The Calcutta government demanded apology and backed Lambert in all his actions. The position was humiliating to the Ava ruler, nonetheless the governor of Rangoon was agreeable for reparations. Dalhousie was not satisfied and wrote a threatening letter to Ava and declared war for prestige. The Burmese were defeated and the province of Pegu was annexed to British dominion even without a treaty. Thus lower Burma along with the coastal regions were brought into British territory and the Burmese had to acquiesce in this loss.

The next step was the total annexation of Burma which came thirtytwo years later. This period reflects the aggressive intentions of British mercantile community, on the one hand, and the effort of the Burmese government to ward off the impending danger of final annexation of their territory into the British Empire and loss of their sovereignty. The attitude of the Government of India was one of subservience to British

financial interests which were to be promoted by removing all restrictions on their trade and opening commerce with China by way of Upper Burma. The ever mounting greed of British merchants might have precipitated a crisis but both the governments, of Burma and England, imposed restraints on bellicosity which prevented actual outbreak of war for many years. But combustible material was accumulating which exploded ultimately destroying Burmese independence.

Early in 1853 change occurred in the rulership of Burma as a result of palace revolution leading to the accession of Mindon to the throne and expulsion of Pagan who retired into honourable captivity. Mindon hated bloodshed, favoured peace and was eager to establish amicable relations with the British. He sent a mission to Calcutta which was well received, but their request for the restoration of territory recently occupied by the British was curtly repudiated by Dalhousie who told the envoy, "So long as the sun shines those territories will never be restored to the kingdom of Ava." The Governor-General also despatched a mission to Ava under Phayre seeking for a treaty to formalise the annexations, which was repeatedly demanded by the British Government. There was some sinister motive also which is evident from the character of its personnel. It consisted of men "capable in various ways of collecting and furnishing information to the government upon all points on which it may be of advantage hereafter to possess accurate knowledge." There was a surgeon to report on climatic conditions, a military officer to enquire into the military potential of Burma and the route to its capital, a naval officer to furnish full information about navigation in the Irravaddy and an artist to draw sketches of the river and country. However the mission did not succeed in negotiating a treaty, despite threats of withholding permission for the import of sulphur and warlike stores. Mindon did not yield on this point and Dalhousie was prevented from internal difficulties in pushing the matter to extremes. Mindon, on his side, did not wish to exploit the Revolt of 1857 to his advantage on the principle, "we do not strike a friend when he is in distress." This forbearance on both the sides yielded good results and commercial treaties were entered into in 1862, and 1867, promising profitable commerce for the British. By the first

treaty duties were regulated to one per cent for all imports into Burma by way of Rangoon or from China for export to Rangoon. British merchants were also allowed entry into Burma for commercial purposes and they could make purchases without hindrance or settle anywhere. This treaty failed to satisfy British merchants whose appetite for gains was whetted with every concession. To them the failure of the Burmese government to abolish duties on its side, owing to serious financial difficulties, and the system of royal monopolies imposed for augmenting the revenue of the state, were symptoms of breach of faith by King Mindon. Clamour for severe reprisals was raised and demand for annexation was voiced at many gatherings of the mercantile community. Even British press rendered support to such a move. The Government of India, however, maintained its sanity. Phayre was sent to Mandalay to secure agreement on the modification of the right of monopoly in favour of British subjects who might be accorded the privilege of exporting precious metals. Also the Burmese government was to pledge itself not to levy more than 5 per cent duty on exports and imports. He also sought the right of posting British agents at the chief customs houses. Phayre did not meet with success initially and Sir John Lawrence had to write to the King reminding him of the difficulties of Burma and the value of British friendship. There was threat of reimposition of customs duty on the British border. Mindon yielded and reduced the duties to 5 per cent and agreed to abolish royal monopolies except on rubies, earth oil and timber. The Treaty of 1867 also provided for certain rights of extra-territoriality involving the setting up of mixed courts for trial of disputes between British and Burmese subjects. Moreover permission was granted for a British Agent to be established at Bhamo and sanction was accorded for exploring expeditions into Western China. British steamers were also permitted to navigate the Irrawaddy upto Mandalay and beyond. These were no inconsiderable gains for the British and indicate the helplessness and friendly intentions of the Burmese king.

There was no end to misunderstandings as the grievances of British merchants were multiplying, and their demands increased further. British Associated Chamber of Commerce

and other mercantile bodies in England were pressing for the opening of the route to Yunnan in China so that American competition in the eastern empire might be obviated. Suggestions were made for constructing railway line through Burma to Shanghai in China and a plan for telegraph line was also mooted. Thus imperial interests were dictating policy towards Burma, though the Government of India did not fall into line with many of these suggestions. In 1874 and 1875 with Salisbury as Secretary of State for India there was greater activity in exploring the Bhamo route into Yunnan, but the scheme was dropped after Margary's murder by Yunnanese tribesmen in 1875, as the route was not considered suitable for railway construction. However trade with China in this direction remained the objective of British traders. Their activities inevitably created suspicion and fear in the Burmese mind. Another matter which excited British opinion was the method adopted by Mindon to augment his revenues. By the treaty of 1867 he had been deprived of the right to monopolise trade, but the finances of the state demanded resort to methods of increasing his income. In 1871 he contemplated reviving the monopolies, but on a protest by the British he gave way. However he monopolised timber trade and resorted to a subterfuge to obtain control over trade by purchasing piece-goods and other imports. Also the king turned into the biggest dealer in the produce of the land, so that the foreign merchants had to purchase their goods only through him. This practice affected the profits of the British and a hue and cry was raised by them. The Government of India was helpless as there was no infringement of the treaty rights. While adhering to the letter of the treaty the king's action amounted to evasion of its spirit. Any action touching the pockets of British merchants necessarily led to suspicion and consequent desire to overthrow the independent kingship of Burma, which was now openly asserted in the British circles.

On the question of mixed courts, amounting to the imposition of extra-territoriality, there was some conflict of interests. The treaty had provided for the establishment of the British Political Agent's Court at Mandalay to try cases in which British and Burmese residents were involved. The Burmese ministers were prepared to allow the Agent to try cases in his house-



but did not cherish the idea of his maintaining a proper court house. Sladen, however, insisted on a formal court which was conceded by an agreement which provided for the establishment of the court for the trial of all suits between registered British subjects. Mixed courts with Burmese officials being present might be held for the trial of mixed suits but in such cases there were difficulties in the execution of its decrees. Thus this matter also befogged the relations between the two powers. But the political status of Karenni both western and eastern, as well as the trend of Mindon's foreign policy led to friction. The British were interested in the timber of Karenni, hence they resented any interference by Burmese government in that region. Also the French had established themselves to the east of Karenni in Tonquin. Therefore the British wanted to keep the Karenni route open and bring the Shan States under their control in order to maintain a watch over French activities. When Mindon sent troops in 1873 to occupy Karenni the British objected to it. Ultimately an agreement was forced on the king by which Karenni was to remain independent. Northbrook even ordered military preparations when Burmese sent troops to Shan States and summoned the Karenni Chief to Mandalay. He informed the Burmese government that their claim to either part of Karenni would not be recognised. This decision naturally was opposed to the sovereign rights of Burma, but British imperial interests demanded restriction of these.

The serious most event was the reorientation of Burmese foreign policy at a time when south east Asia had developed into an arena of the clash of European imperialism. The growing French influence in Indo-China and their desire to expand it into Burma prompted Mindon to seek French assistance as a counterpoise to British aggressiveness in his dominion. A commercial treaty was concluded in 1873 in Paris, but it remained abortive. A fresh treaty was negotiated and the Burmese envoy visited Paris, but British opposition prevented agreement. Mindon desired French good offices in his disputes with the British who claimed special rights in Burma. He also sent embassies to Italy, Germany and Russia seeking arms there, but there was no success. Mindon died in 1878 and while his relations with the British did not transgress the

agreement made between the two, they were steadily deteriorating and the king was gradually inclining more and more towards the French. Their technicians were at his court and he had intended to use them for the manufacture of arms as a safeguard against future British aggression. Thibaw succeeded to the throne and from the beginning of his reign tension grew culminating in the final annexation of Burma by the British. He continued the policy of his predecessor and sent embassies to European courts and sought closer alliance with France, with whom a treaty was concluded in 1885 allowing the French the most favoured nations status. A French Consul was stationed in Mandalay and a Burmese envoy in Paris. The French were allowed to establish a Bank in Mandalay and were granted concession to build railway in Burma and take over royal monopolies in timber, rubies and earth-oil. They were to advance loans to Thibaw in return for industrial concessions. The British were alarmed at this process of growing French influences within their zone of interest and protested in Paris, whose government repudiated the actions of their Consul. Thus Thibaw's approach to European governments was nullified, though the king's policies and attitude as well as the presence of the French in that quarter did not abate British anxiety.

Meanwhile certain internal developments precipitated the crisis. On his accession Thibaw removed a large number (80) of his kinsmen by massacre thereby eliminating all rivalry for the throne. This horrid assassination did not fail to evoke strong resentment among the British, and their Resident was required to lodge a strong protest against this barbarous act. The Burmese government treated the representation with contumely and curtly replied that the king as an independent sovereign had full right to take all necessary measures to prevent disturbances in his own country. Therefore Resident Shaw threatened to break off all relations with the Court if massacres continued. This created alarm in Burmese circles and troops were called and rushed to the frontiers to anticipate invasion. On the British side also precautionary measures were adopted and an armed steamboat was kept ready to rush aid to the Resident. The Government of India, under Lytton, favoured strong action and might have delivered an

ultimatum, as in the case of Afghanistan, but owing to their involvement in the war with Kabul and the Zulus in Africa, the British Government was not prepared to resort to extreme measures. Nevertheless Lytton adopted stern attitude and authorised the Resident to intimate to the ministers that general recognition and support of the heir apparent by the Government of India will be proportioned in degree to his adoption of a new policy towards the British Government, especially regarding free access to the king, and greater consideration for position and influence of the Resident. The Governor-General wanted to exploit the situation for improving British interests and pressing to a formal issue the greivances of British subjects and "evasions of public engagement." He wrote to the Secretary of State that the Burmese government was ill-treating the British subjects "in a spirit of bravado." Hence in his view "the time is now come when the indulgence of this spirit should be effectually checked. If the Burmese Government persists in subjecting British subjects, whether Europeans or Natives, to barbarous Laws, one remedy may possibly be found in the enforcement of extra-territorial rights for all British subjects in Burma and the establishments of British courts for the administration of justice in all cases which affect British subjects". At the same time remonstrances were made on the slaughter perpetrated by the king. Thus commenced the tension which ended in the loss of Burmese freedom.

The Resident was greatly irritated at the condition of his removing the shoes when visiting the Court and the subjection of the British subjects to Burmese jurisdiction. To him King Thibaw's conduct was sorely offensive and the insult to the assistant Resident further estranged the relations between the two governments. Decrees of mixed courts were not respected and property of British subjects was attached. Military preparations also began on both sides of the frontier, and panic gripped the population. This had an adverse effect on British trade and credit was refused. It further led to depression in trade and severely affected British profits. Hence the Government of India was opposed to any strong action and the Burmese ministers were also not prepared to provoke war. Thus crisis was staved off for the moment. With the death of Resident Shaw and the disasters in Afghanis-

tan in 1879, all British staff was removed from Mandalay. King Thibaw's approach to despatch a mission to India for restoring friendly relations was spurned by the Viceroy who was "seriously dissatisfied with the position and treatment of the British Resident at Mandalay." On their side the Burmese made efforts at conciliation but the temper on the other side was steadily growing hot. British Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, the Chamber of Commerce and independent merchants resented indirect imposition of royal monopolies in Burma and addressed remonstrances to their government. Protests were sent by the Chief Commissioner which had the effect of abolishing monopolies. A Burmese embassy also arrived in Simla in 1882 and negotiations began for the revision of treaties. They were keen on the right to import arms freely and treating directly with the government in England, bypassing the subordinate Government of India. The British were prepared to permit importation of arms under certain conditions and discourage hostile actions by Burmese subjects in British territory, but they stoutly refused to agree to direct contact with London. This led to the failure of the steps for treaty revision and compelled Mandalay government to seek foreign assistance. Meanwhile certain disputes between the two governments led to further deterioration of relations, and a cry was raised for annexation of Upper Burma by the British inhabitants including Rangoon Chamber of Commerce and Irrawaddy Flotilla Company which feared danger to its boats. In 1884 demand for annexation became more vocal and the grant of concessions to the French further accentuated British desire to resort to stern action even commencement of hostilities which might end in the loss of Burmese freedom.

The immediate cause of action was provided by the dispute of the Bombay-Burma Trading Corporation which had acquired lease for timber in the Ningyan forests, north of Tongoo. There was complaint against the Corporation of defrauding the government of its dues by bribing their officials. The loss was computed at £.73,333 to the king and £.33,333 to the foresters. The Corporation was asked to pay double the amount to the king and meet the actual losses of the foresters. In default of payment timber was to be seized. The trading body appealed to the Government of India for intervention,

which was in no mood to follow a policy of forbearance. The Panjdeh crisis had been resolved, the British were free from entanglement in Egypt and their international situation was free from anxiety. Hence an ultimatum was sent to the king demanding suspension of demands on the Corporation, suitable reception to their Resident, facilities for the development of trade with China and subordination of their foreign policy to the British. The Burmese were unable to submit to this insult and refused to accept the British demands. Their response was treated as 'uncompromising rejection' of the demands, and military action was adopted. There was little resistance to the march of the Indian army, and Thibaw was arrested, deposed and exiled. Thus early in 1886, the whole of Burma was incorporated with the Indian Empire and one more Asian state lost its independence.

### TIBET

The expansion of British empire in the east had terminated with the annexation of the whole of Burma. Commercial interest was the dominant motive to which was added the fear of the presence of a rival European imperial power in the region. Through wars and annexations the danger of French imperialism expanding nearer the borders of India was eliminated, and not only the trade of Burma was appropriated by British merchants but also route to China was opened. Similarly to the north also the same motives of commerce and security prompted the Government of India to probe into the states of Nepals, Bhutan and Tibet. With Nepal, by the Treaty of Sagauli consequent on the war which humbled the rulers there, conditions of peaceful coexistence were established. The Government of India pledged itself to non-interference in the internal administration of Nepal though it controlled the external relations of the mountain kingdom and afforded it military protection against foreign intrusion. A Resident stayed at Khatmandu and kept close watch on the developments in Nepal. Throughout the nineteenth century and afterwards, friendly relations continued to exist and Nepal accepted the status of a protectorate. Bhutan also came into contact with the British at an early stage of their rule over

Bengal. In the time of Warren Hastings, when the Deva Raja of Bhutan invaded Cooch Bihar, the British intervened and compelled the Bhutanese to retreat and sue for peace. Thereafter, for many decades the problem of the frontier between Bengal and Bhutan occasioned tension, which was accentuated after the British annexation of Assam. Essentially the dispute related to the Duars, which provided routes between Assam and Bengal, on one side, and Bhutan on the other. The British were keen to control the Duars, mainly for their forest wealth and suitability for tea cultivation which the British settlers desired to extend there. Gradually the Duars were occupied by the British, as the Bhutanese could not prevail against the modern armament of British troops. The last war in 1864 settled the issue by the treaty signed in 1865. It stipulated peace and friendship between the two and provided for the cession to the British of the whole tract known as Eighteen Duars as well as the hill territory on the left bank of the Teesta river. Pursuant to this clause the British fixed the boundary and thereby raids and disputes were eliminated. This frontier line provided protection to British possessions in the plains and enabled them "to occupy a commanding position on the main road from Bengal to the capital of Bhutan...It also possesses the great advantage of interposing British territory between Bhutan and Sikkim and thus prevents the Bhotias from approaching Sikkim." There was provision made for extradition on both the sides and by the eighth clause, the British Government assumed the right of arbitrating all disputes between Bhutan, Sikkim and Cooch Behar. The next clause related to the establishment of free trade between the two states. By another clause the British agreed to pay Rs. 50,000 a year to the ruler of Bhutan, apparently as compensation for the loss of territory but in reality to keep a handle to compel the Deva Raja to submit to their will. Throughout this entire period the British were interested in Bhutan as it lay on the commercial route to Tibet and they were keen to absorb the trade with that land. Commerce with Bhutan was not substantial, but its insignificance did not deter the British from trying to control it as it might afford a market for British manufactures. Bhutan was an isolated state and no rival imperial power lay adjacent to its borders. Hence after 1865

the policy of friendly cooperation was pursued and the era of imperialistic intrusion came to an end. Gupta ascribes this change to the growing influence of Russia in Central Asia, and the keenness of the British "to bring countries like Bhutan and Tibet within their sphere of influence so as to provide for the security of the North-East Frontier of their Empire in India." The policy of "non-interference in the internal affairs of Bhutan and their unwillingness to exercise control on its relations with independent neighbours like China did much to win the goodwill of the Bhutan Government." Thus Bhutan's independence was maintained though it was nominal and depended mainly on its remaining free from external influence and British interests there remaining intact.

Among the northern states, however, Tibet was the most important with which the British, for commercial reasons from the beginning of their contact with Bengal, wished to maintain close relations. Their interest in this Hermit Kingdom was stimulated by a number of factors, namely, trade, contiguous boundaries and Tibet's pivotal position as a backyard of the Chinese Empire and lying in the way of the southward expansion of Russia. These factors singly or conjointly influenced British policy towards Tibet from about the end of the nineteenth century to 1914 when that state came within the protectorate of the Government of India. From 1890 problems of the frontier and trade got intermixed. By gradual expansion the intervening states, between India and Tibet, had been brought into intimate contact with the British. Bhutan had ceded territories and accepted the right of the Government of India to arbitrate in its disputes with its neighbours. Sikkim had accepted British control in its external relations by the Treaty of 1817 and accepted their arbitration in disputes with its neighbours, and not to allow the armed forces of other country to pass through its territories. In 1890 British grip over that state was further tightened by the Anglo-Chinese Convention, following the abortive Tibetan invasion of Sikkim when British protectorate over Sikkim was accepted by China and the Sikkim-Tibetan boundary was recognised as the water parting of Teesta river. Similarly in Tibetan-Nepalese disputes the British had played their role on behalf of Nepal with whom they had close diplomatic relations. Further with Kashmir coming

into the network of the feudatory states, practically the entire southern border of Tibet was hemmed in by states looking up to British protection.

Tibet was a land-locked state encircled by chains of high mountains and situated on a plateau with an average altitude of more than 10000 feet above sea level. Nature had turned the country into wind swept, snow-bound land with small population and scanty agricultural production, carried on in the valleys. Industrially it had not progressed beyond the primitive state of cottage industries, but people were artistic in their pursuits and content to lead a self-sufficient life. However, the land was known to be potentially rich in mineral wealth for the exploitation of which no efforts had been made. The people were hardy, industrious and simple. The state was a theocracy under the headship of Dalai Lama with his seat at Lhasa and Toshi Lama of Shigatse. The former had primacy though the latter had greater sacerdotal sanctity. The administration of the state was carried on by an oligarchy which accepted subordination to the religious heads. The Tibetans had their special culture, professed Buddhist faith of the Mahayan school and monastic life was considered to be the highest virtue. They loved their isolation and viewed with jealousy any outside intrusion into their land. Though they were interested in trade with the neighbouring countries, its scope was limited to their meagre requirements and they did not permit foreign merchants to enter their boundaries. For some time the Tibetan government had accepted the suzerainty of the Chinese Emperor which however was nominal and consisted of a five yearly mission carrying presents to the Emperor in Peking and bringing in costly gifts and articles of merchandise into their country. After the reverses in the Nepalese war at the close of the eighteenth century, Tibet had accepted Chinese protectorate signified by the presence of Chinese Ambans in Lhasa to overlook affairs of government and afford military protection in time of need. But the Ambans scarcely exercised any control and their voice in government was, if at all, very feeble. The Tibetans, however, had used Chinese protectorate as a convenient screen to ward off any interference from or contact with the outside world.

The Chinese in the nineteenth century failed to exercise



any sway over Tibet or bend the rulers to their will. Any agreements made by China with foreign powers on behalf of Tibet had no impact on their policies or actions. Thus though nominally subordinate, Tibet was an independent state enjoying its isolation. Towards the British, the process of expansion of whose power in India they had clearly watched and deeply analysed, they had entertained deep seated distrust. The British were considered to be fond of war, prone to raise disturbances and make themselves masters of a country. On grounds of sheer protection, Tibetans had entertained distrust of the foreigners and refused them permission to tread on their land. More particularly they despised the British for their "invasive march through Hindustan had inspired the Dalai Lama with a natural terror"; and this prejudice was accentuated by the Chinese whose experience of the British was none too happy. The northward expansion of British empire brought Tibet within the purview of their direct political attention which demanded some tangible contact. But this fact alarmed the authorities at Lhasa as their land now became conterminous if not exactly with British India but atleast with the British sphere of influence, as their political control prevailed in the neighbouring hill states. British interference in Gurkha-Tibetan War, rumours spread by Chinese Ambans and refugees from Sikkim enhanced their alarm further which was greatly aggravated by surreptitious attempts by the British to explore the hermit kingdom. British activities nearer their border over a period of nearly hundred years compelled the Tibetans to close their doors tightly and crawl into greater isolation. Their policy was to keep both Britain and Russia at a distance from their land.

But the British had other views. Their merchants were keen to extend trade into Tibet, and endeavours were made in this direction from the time of Warren Hastings onwards. He despatched Bogle in 1774 on a mission to explore the possibilities of trade and gain the goodwill of Tibetan authorities for opening commerce. Bogle met with a kind reception by Toshi Lama at Shigatse, but was not allowed to proceed to Lhasa to meet the Dalai Lama. No treaty was made either but faint beginnings of trade between Bengal and Tibet were made. Another mission under Turner was sent in 1782 with similar

objects, but beyond verbal promises of trade facilities by Toshi Lama no tangible effects were discernible in that direction. However when Gurkhas of Nepal invaded Tibet which sought Chinese help to expel the invaders, the protectors established control there and as a consequence all intercourse with other countries was stopped and contact with Bengal Lost. For more than half a century thereafter despite occasional endeavours to open them, the doors of Tibet remained closed to the British. Trade became negligible. The Government of India was aware of the possible Chinese obstruction, hence it was diffident of success, and reports that traders from the Chinese side had been forbidden entry into Tibet by its officials convinced the British that they were averse to expanding trade with India. There was a feeling that the extent and value of such trade would be incommensurate with the expenditure involved in constructing new roads, and it was considered to be sheer waste of money. The Government of India was not prepared to force trade upon an unwilling people. But outside of government opinion was steadily growing for taking up trade with Tibet. British textile interests were keen to develop market in Tibet for their goods and the Secretary of State for India supported this viewpoint. In 1875 while disclaiming any intention to send an official commercial mission to Tibet or pushing Indian or European merchants therein, he desired that regular traffic might be developed through Bhutan. Proposals were made for opening road through Sikkim into Tibet but no action was taken immediately.

Meanwhile British planters had developed tea cultivation in Assam and northern Bengal and were keen to exploit Chinese and Tibetan market for the commodity and open overland route to China to facilitate export. Tea interests were prominently active in the last quarter of the 19th century towards opening commercial relations with Tibet. In 1882, Lapper, the superintendent of tea estate in Assam, approached the Secretary of State for sanctioning the exploration of Assam-China route, but Ripon did not favour it because of restrictions imposed by the treaty with China and the risk involved in it. In 1883, the Director of Agriculture, North West Provinces drew attention to Chinese policy of forbidding import of Indian tea in Tibet and Nepal and wanted action to be taken to remove the

embargo, but Ripon did not countenance the move as being premature. Nevertheless, the tea planters and British industrialists, particularly manufacturers of woollen goods, persistently demanded commercial openings in Tibet, and the Bengal government persuaded the Government of India to send Macaulay there for negotiations. The Chinese foreign office agreed to grant him the necessary permission to visit Lhasa, but the mission was abandoned. It was alleged in British circles that this abandonment led to the eclipse of whatever trade relations had existed earlier and also to Tibetan disparagement of the power and importance of the British. Loss of prestige was seriously apprehended and the government during the next few years discountenanced all moves to open commerce. Bengal Chamber of Commerce prodded the government to take up the question of Tibetan trade with China, but no action was taken because the atmosphere on the Tibetan frontier was not deemed to be congenial for efforts to develop trade. Two years later when Prestige, Director of Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, suggested exploitation of Western Tibet by developing trade in wool, silver and fir, by extending railway from Darjeeling in that direction, the government were unwilling "to plunge into an unknown adventure". Before 1890, thus, both official and private agencies had been trying to impress upon the India government urgent need to put Indo-Tibetan trade on a sound and secure footing. The government had not however lent its support to these moves, though it had kept itself well informed about Tibetan affairs, and British Residents in Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal had evinced interest in the happenings there.

Meanwhile the Government of India had shown eagerness in explorations into the forbidden land secretly. Sarat Chandra Bose went to Lhasa disguised as a student of theology and extensively explored wide regions of central Tibet between 1879-1883, and submitted reports to the government on political affairs there. In 1884, another Indian explorer Krishna, alias A.K., made a report after a stay of four years in Tibet, on trade routes. In early nineties one M.H. and his son secretly passed through Nepal into Tibet, and about the same time an Englishman and a Bengali Sadhu Gangadhar had carried on explorations in Tibet. In 1891, Lt. Bamer of the Survey

Department was to be sent for which Chinese permission was obtained, and again in 1895 Capt. Deasay was sent to explore northern Tibet. These surreptitious intrusions into the hermit land were sponsored by the Government of India, but it took care not to hurt the feelings of the Chinese and Tibetan authorities and censured those of its officers who had entered Tibet with their permission but against the explicit wishes of the Tibetans. Tibetan attitude was necessarily one of suspicion regarding British motives which had been heightened by steady extension of their political influence in the states on their southern and western border. From Ladakh to Bhutan, the entire belt of Himalayan states had been brought within the sphere of British influence in the nineteenth century.

Their penetration into Sikkim was most galling to the Tibetans, as they claimed that state to be subject to its suzerainty. First contact was made with Sikkim by the East India Company in 1817, when by a treaty, the former agreed to refer its disputes with Nepal to British arbitration and undertook not to permit European or American subjects to reside in the state and not to levy transit duties on merchandize except customs duty at regular trade marts. This agreement was akin to those signed at that time with the Indian states, and thus Sikkim was converted into a subsidiary state surrendering to the suzerainty of the Government of India. Again in 1861 by treaty revision, Sikkim abolished all restrictions on traveller's and monopolises in trade, and accepted the obligation to keep roads in good condition and submit to British arbitration in all its disputes with the neighbouring states. No armed force of any other state could pass through Sikkim without British permission. Later when in 1888 Tibet sent its armed force into Sikkim to enforce its obedience to Lhasa, which according to Tibetan and Chinese writers was subject to Tibetan suzerainty, this armed incursion was deemed to be an unprovoked invasion of a dependency, and the Government of India took measures to expel the invaders. The Chinese government intervened and negotiators met to hammer out a Convention, which was agreed to by the Chinese, but the Tibetans neither participated in the conference nor accepted the treaty. By this Convention of 1890, British protectorate over Sikkim was fully acknowledged by the

Chinese, involving exclusion of Tibetan control over its internal administration and foreign relations. Also Sikkim-Tibet boundary was determined at the crest of the watershed between Teesta and its affluents on one side and the rivers flowing into Tibet on the other. It was also agreed that a trade convention would be discussed later so that Indo-Tibetan commerce might be facilitated. This agreement paved the way for British intervention into Tibet even though the authorities there had taken no interest in it, and it was made on their behalf by the Chinese whose suzerainty was definitely accepted by the British Government.

It will be clear from this account that the Government of India had continued to show interest in Tibet largely because of its potentialities of trade which the British capital was keen to exploit. Frontier disputes both in the Sikkim area as well as on the northern border of Kumayun also occasioned frequent attention. The Tibetans on their side were feeling uncomfortable at the presence of the mighty empire to their south whose proneness to expansion was well-known. Hence they tried to close their borders to foreign intrusion and maintained an ostrich like attitude, believing that their seclusion would prevent encroachment into their territories. In the decade after 1890 Convention, trade and border incidents created a situation which necessarily led to the aggressive move by Curzon.

The 1890 Convention had left over the matter of trade, pasturage and communications between the officials of the two sides to be resolved later by joint commissioners. After protracted discussions Trade Regulations were signed in 1893 by the British and Chinese commissioners, without the presence of any Tibetan official. By these Regulations provision was made for opening a trade mart at Yatung on the frontier where the Government of India could station its officers to supervise commercial operations. The British subjects were free to hire houses and transport, and conduct their commercial transactions without vexation or restraint. Except for arms, salt, liquors and drugs, all other articles were exempted from duty for five years, while Indian tea was also not permitted into Tibet for five years after which it would have to pay the same import duty as Chinese tea on its entry into Great Britain. Trade disputes were to be settled between the political officer-

in Sikkim and Chinese frontier officer, so also official communications for Lhasa were to be delivered to the latter. Provision was also made for the grazing of Tibetan cattle in Sikkim under regulations to be made by the Indian government. This agreement was unsatisfactory both for Tibetans and the British, and the reluctance of the former to abide by it, on the ground that it did not have their consent, complicated matters in future. Viceroy Lansdowne had accepted them because of political necessity at a time when the Pamir was a point of conflict between Great Britain and Russia, or the formal Chinese suzerainty over Burma had to be repudiated. He needed Chinese goodwill for the settlement of both these disputes and thus endorsed an agreement which failed to meet British mercantile interests or the aspirations of officialdom to have a dominant position on the Indo-Tibetan frontier. The Tibetans were not prepared to allow free trade with India, hence erected a wall ten miles of Yatung on their side at Phari where ten percent duty was charged on all imports. They also were reluctant to submit to any restrictions on their grazing rights in Sikkim which they regarded as a feudatory, territory and objected to any demarcation of the boundary on the Sikkimese side. The Bengal government and White, the political officer, resented Tibetan recalcitrance, but Viceroy Elgin was not prepared to sanction any stern measures, as that might affect prospects of trade which was fast growing. He connived at the violation of restrictions on grazing, and did not permit White to enforce boundary settlement, and asked him to relinquish such operations. Also he took no measures when a few boundary pillars that had been erected were demolished by the Tibetans. Thus by 1898 when Curzon arrived no definite solution had been found of the outstanding problems and the Tibetans were not forced to submit to British ambitions and grabbing expansionism.

The new Viceroy had travelled widely in Asia and had acquired intimate knowledge of its affairs. Curzon was a representative of the imperialist school and his analysis of the international situation was influenced by such leanings. He stood for monopoly of control in the states situated on the borders of India and could not tolerate any hostile influence to be lodged any where on its glacis. He was also keen to

promote British trade and exploit all resources for the purpose. But his dominant motive was imperial defence and elimination of Russian influence from the territories contiguous to Indian frontiers. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Russian empire had made great strides in Asia and was fast converging on the Indian borders. Hold over Pamir in the north, control over northern Persia and aggressive move towards Seistan on the way to acquiring a base on the Persian Gulf were symptoms of impending danger to Indian security and British imperial interests in the region. Simultaneously Russian bear-hug on the Chinese empire was fastening. The Manchu empire lay prostrate, the Chinese melon had been cut and the Boxer rebellion had been crushed by the European powers. Rumours were rife of China entering into agreement with Russia in relation to Tibet and submitting to their mounting influence. In a situation as this the news of some sort of contact between Lhasa and St. Petersburg operated as a red rag to the Gallic bull and Curzon contemplated deterrent action to settle it before danger might develop also on the northern frontier of India, on the other side of the Himalayas. Tibet was thus being turned into a new arena for Anglo-Russian competition, and because of the suspected protrusion of Russian influence there Curzon was determined to bring it under British protectorate. In addition to the two problems which had defied solution so far, ostensibly because of Tibetan fear of the big brother on the south and ostentatiously provocative attitude of Bengal officials, the danger of Russian presence, diplomatic or military, inclined Curzon to utilise the new factor for enforcing the Convention of 1890-1893 and promoting British interests of trade and converting Tibet into a subordinate ally.

In line with the thinking of British merchants and officials, Curzon was emphatic about the uselessness of Yatung as a trade mart and pinned his faith on Phari, inside Tibet and having a more favourable situation for commercial purposes. To obtain this advantage he was prepared to yield to the Tibetan wishes in the matter of boundary adjustment, grazing rights even to the extent of surrendering Giagong to them. But to achieve this settlement he insisted on direct dealings with Tibetan authorities rather than through the Chinese whose shadowy

suzerainty he termed as a farce and fraud, never respected by the Lamas except as a screen to interdict foreign encroachments on their isolation. Salisbury, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India and Curzon the Viceroy of India, were unanimous in the belief that "Chinese advisory authority in Tibet had been little more than nominal", that it was shadowy, an unreality, a mere farce, devoid of all substance. They were unanimous in their estimate of China which had lost vigour, was battered severely by foreign interference and unable to enforce nominal suzerainty over the outlying parts of the empire. Curzon therefore was keen to repudiate Chinese non-existent, farcical suzerainty, as he had no use for its agency, and desired to open direct negotiations with the rulers in Lhasa. This was the basis of his Tibetan policy which gathered emphasis and acquired vehemence because of the Russian nightmare. Hence he decided to make direct approach to the Dalai Lama. His letters forwarded through the agency of Ugyen Kazi, the Bhutanese Vakil, or the Governor of Gangtok were returned unopened by the Dalai Lama, and all attempts at direct approach were thwarted by the obstinate refusal of Lhasa to have dealings with the British except through the Chinese Amban who had little impact on Tibetan policy. This attitude of "rudeness and indifference" in not even entertaining correspondence with the authorities in India, frustrated Curzon's design of employing peaceful medium of direct approach to Lhasa and caused immense resentment in Calcutta. The Viceroy then decided to take more determined action to compel the Lamas to yield to his will. He expressed his chagrin in a letter to the Secretary of State, Commenting upon the "contemptuous silence of the Dalai Lama" he wrote, "it is really the most grotesque and indefensible thing that at a distance of little more than 200 miles from our frontier, this community of unarmed monks should set us perpetually at defiance." In this attitude resort to show of force was contemplated not for the conquest of Tibet but by a demonstration of the armed might to persuade them to adhere to the treaty of 1890 and meet British wishes regarding trade. There was little enthusiasm for such a course in Whitehall at a time when Great Britain had faced the Boer War, suffered from paucity of armed forces and had no



friends in Europe. The British Cabinet was suspicious of the hostile attitude of Russia and France and was conscious of their opposition to a unilateral settlement of Tibetan dispute. Hence they cautioned the Viceroy against strong measures. This difference in the outlook of Calcutta and London governed the entire proceedings towards Tibet.

Initially the Viceroy desired the Political Officer merely to enforce the treaty terms regarding the boundary, erect pillars, and close the grazing grounds. Demolition of pillars would be a sign of Tibetan hostility which might lead to the "occupation of Chumbi Valley until they agreed to a diplomatic conference at Lhasa", which was the main objective at the time. But soon the situation became complicated by the interposition of Russian element in the dispute and precipitated aggressive action. While the Dalai Lama refused even to receive letters from the Viceroy, news was received of his contact with the Russian Czar through a Buriat Mongol monk Dorjieff, who had worked as tutor to the young Dalai Lama. Two of his visits to Petersburg were reported where he was received by the Czar and given presents for the Dalai Lama, which according to the information of Tokugawa, a secret Japanese traveller then in Lhasa, contained gifts of arms and ammunition. The Russian Foreign Office, when questioned by the British Ambassador, denied any diplomatic significance in the reception of Dorjieff, who was presumed to have visited Russia for collecting donations from the Buddhists there and the gifts were called as customary offerings to the head of Buddhist Church by a sovereign who ruled over Buddhist subjects also. But the special notice taken of Dorjieff's presence by the press and the public and treatment given to him by the royalty, when he had audience with the Emperor and the Empress as well as the Foreign Minister roused misgivings and speculation in British circles, both in Great Britain and India, regarding the intentions of Russia in relation to Tibet. It was natural too in view of the recent Russian activity in despatching scientific missions to Tibet and the rumours in Mongolia of Russian efforts to stir the Lamas against the British and offers made to them of help in case of war. Curzon was fully conscious of the physical impossibility of Russian invasion of that state, but establishment of Russian

diplomatic influence was not barred out in the then Tibetan mood of estrangement with China and the apprehension of threat to their security from the side of India. The Viceroy, as his predecessors, viewed pacific Russian political influence in the states in the vicinity of India as pregnant with menace to imperial interests. Rumours of Russo-Chinese negotiations regarding Tibet as also that of a treaty between Russia and Tibet further aggravated misgivings about Russian intentions. Russian protestations of no interest in Tibet did not pacify alarm in India, rather Dorjjeff episode made Curzon determined to take positive steps to tie Tibet to British apron-strings by establishing political pre-eminence in Lhasa. Reports from Petersburg and Peking of Sino-Russian agreement and despatch of three Tibetans to Russia "to enquire if, in case of any disturbance, Russia would assist Tibet", made the British Foreign Office warn the Chinese government that in case of any such arrangements they would be compelled to take steps for the protection of British interests by occupying some Chinese territory. Vehement denial by the Chinese of entering into such a self-effacing arrangement with Russia, or the assurance given by Russian Ambassador in London of there being no convention with China or interference in Tibetan affairs, though they would not hesitate to take action elsewhere, presumably Mongolia, in case British grew alarmingly active in Tibet, or even conciliatory measures adopted by the Chinese government did not pacify Curzon.

By the end of 1902, thus three important factors had operated to influence Curzon's decision to send a mission to Lhasa. These were the fear of Russian hegemony over Tibet, China's inability to assert its suzerainty over Tibet and its suspected alignment with Russia and finally the Tibetan obduracy. The necessity of preventing Russian protectorate being established in Tibet took precedence over the earlier problems of commerce and border demarcation. The Viceroy decided to take minatory steps to maintain Tibet within the British orbit and save it from falling within the Russian sphere of influence which would be detrimental to Indian interests and hazardous to its security. Russia was still powerful enough, before being mauled by Japan, to be taken cognizance of in determining British policy towards Tibet, and Lansdowne, the British Foreign

Secretary, had warned them that in case of the display of any activity on their part, the British would not hesitate to reply by activity, equivalent to theirs and even exceeding it. The Chinese conciliatory move to depute Ho, a senior official, to negotiate with White on border matters did not materialise. In this situation the Government of India defined its attitude and outlined the steps which it contemplated, in the despatch of 8 January 1903. It referred to the abortive measures to open communication with Tibet, and also to the fear created by White's action on the frontier, as well as the recent interest shown by Russia. It suggested acceptance of the Chinese invitation to a conference, but desired that it should meet at Lhasa in the spring and that an accredited representative of the Tibetan government should be associated with it, so that the "wall of Tibetan impassability and obstruction" might be demolished. It wanted the conference not merely to determine matters concerning the Sikkim frontier, but should cover "the entire question of our future relations, commercial and otherwise with Tibet, and should further result in the appointment of a permanent consular or diplomatic representative in Lhasa." The Government of India wanted direct dealings with Tibet and repudiated the Chinese claim to suzerainty, which it termed "as a constitutional fiction, a political affectation which has only been maintained because of its convenience to both parties." Curzon believed that "Tibet is too anxious to meet our advances, but she is prevented from doing so by the desperate veto of the suzerain." He desired "this solemn farce" to be exposed and firmly denied the reality of Chinese suzerainty. Also the Government of India wanted the mission to be accompanied by armed escort to overawe opposition on the way and ensure its safety in Lhasa. Insistence on its commercial objective was merely a camouflage to hide its real purpose which was political.

Impelled by motives of British diplomatic interests and conscious of the adverse international disposition, the British Cabinet was opposed to the adoption of any aggressive move in Tibet. His Majesty's Government was then engaged in wooing France and therefore Russia also for a detente so as to offer combined resistance to the imperialistic designs of Germany. They did not want dismemberment of the effete

Chinese empire which would ipso facto follow British occupation or control over Tibet. Hence the Cabinet did not initially endorse Curzon's plan of an armed mission holding conference with the Tibetans in Lhasa. Thereupon the Viceroy proposed that the meeting be held at Khambajong which was inside Tibetan territory instead of Yatung, and the change would be in consonance with Chinese proposal to hold the conference at Yatung or some other convenient place. Curzon appointed Major Younghusband as the leader of the mission, with White as an associate, who was to be accompanied by an escort of 200 men only, though a larger force was to be kept nearer the frontier within Sikkim to be available in case of necessity. This modification was accepted by the Secretary of State. Curiously enough the British Government was successively yielding to the proposals of the Government of India for advance farther and farther upto Lhasa, and sanctioned use of larger armed forces to defeat almost unarmed Tibetan resistance on the way. Each step led to another and Curzon and his agent, who were intent only on dictating terms at Lhasa manouvered to push the British Cabinet into a position of supporting their aggressive intentions. On the other side, the Tibetans, unwisely and unrealistically continued to insist on the return of the Younghusband mission to Yatung before beginning conversations, and opposed the march of trained and well equipped Indian army contingents with the rabble which alone they could provide to encounter foreign intrusion. The result was their rout at every point which was a foregone conclusion. Ultimately Younghusband reached Lhasa and there compelled the Tibetan authorities to accept a dictated Convention or Treaty. The Dalai Lama had fled to Mangolia and the treaty was signed in the Potal Palace on 7 September 1904 by his representatives. Thus was Tibet brought within the ambit of British protectorate,. All the while, the British Government kept the Russian Foreign Office beguiled with assurances of going to Lhasa merely to "obtain satisfaction and reparation", and stated in the most emphatic terms that "so long as no Power endeavours to intervene in the affairs of Tibet, they would not attempt either to annex it, to establish a protectorate over it, or in any way to control its internal administration". This statement guided British policy and

operated as a restraint on Curzon's ambitions. The Lhasa Convention was made to correspond with it.

The Convention affirmed the resolve of the Tibetan Government to respect the terms of the agreements of 1890 and 1893 and accept the boundary laid therein and erect boundary pillars accordingly. Also two more trade marts were sanctioned at Gyantse and Gartok besides Yatung, to which all British and Tibetan subjects would have the right of free access. The Tibetan government agreed to place no restrictions on trade, open more marts, levy no duties other than provided in the tariff and keep roads in proper repair. They would also appoint their agents at trade marts who would receive communications meant for Lhasa government or Chinese authorities for the transmission of which they were to be held responsible. In this manner the old controversy was settled, and Curzon's demand for a Resident at Lhasa was dispensed with. To meet the cost of war an indemnity of rupees seventy five lakhs was imposed to be realised in seventy five instalments of one lakh rupees a year, and the Chumb Valley was to remain in British occupation till the whole amount was paid. This was contrary to the instructions from Whitehall and the amount was subsequently reduced to twenty five lakhs to be paid in three years. Two clauses related to political control and have particular significance. By one of these the Tibetans agreed to demolish all forts and fortifications and remove all armaments which might impede free communication between the Indian frontier and the towns of Gyantse and Lhasa. The other clause contained conditions which verged on protectorate. By it the Tibetan Government engaged that "without the previous consent of the British Government (a) no portion of Tibetan territory shall be ceded, sold, leased, mortgaged or otherwise given for occupation to any Foreign Power, (b) no such Power shall be permitted to intervene in Tibetan affairs, (c) no Representative or Agent of any Foreign Power shall be admitted to Tibet, (d) no concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs, mining or other rights, shall be granted to any Foreign Power. In the event of consent of such concessions being granted, similar or equivalent concessions shall be granted to the British Government, (e) no Tibetan revenues, either in kind or cash, shall be pledged or assigned to any Foreign Power, or to the subject of any Foreign Power."

In this manner right of pre-emption was accorded to the British and their exclusive control was to be established in Tibet. Without occupation or declaring protectorate, as was pledged to Russia, Tibet was brought within the sphere of British influence exclusively. The British Government henceforth had a special position in the hermit kingdom.

There was a furore in British Parliament and press which led to the reduction in the amount of indemnity and the period of occupation of the Chumb Valley, but no significant alteration was made in the main terms of the Convention. China was also satisfied by an Adhesion Agreement, which was signed as a Convention on 18 June and ratified on 23 July 1906. In this agreement there was no specific mention of Chinese suzerainty. It confirmed the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1904 and affirmed the will of both the contracting parties to take steps for the fulfilment of its terms. China was not to be treated as a foreign state. The British undertook not to annex Tibetan territory or interfere in its administration and China agreed not to permit any other foreign state to interfere therein. Special position of Great Britain in Tibet was further fortified by the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 which recognised Tibet as falling within the British sphere of influence and Russia having no interest there. They recognised suzerain rights of China and special interests of the British. Also they engaged to abstain from all interference in the internal administration of Tibet, and to enter into negotiations with Tibet only through the intermediacy of the Chinese government. The effect of these agreements was that, as Sir Edward Grey put it, "an effective buffer had been built to a Russian advance" and thereby "a frequent source of friction and a possible cause of war" had been eliminated. But in the deteriorating condition of Russia as a major power at the time, this gain was not worth much. However, a new element had been raised to create tension and harm Indian interest. Contrary to the wishes of the Government of India and against the better judgement of Curzon, Chinese suzerainty over Tibet had been recognised by His Majesty's Government and thereby a fiction had been endowed with reality. The two conventions between Britain and China and Britain and Russia had given specific rights to the Chinese empire to act as an intermediary in the relations of Tibet with

India or Russia and thereby its suzerain authority was recognised. To that extent legal form was given to a defacto claim not respected by Tibet. It was a reversal of the existing position and invitation to China to clothe their nominal suzerainty with reality. This led immediately to the assertion of authority by the moribund Manchu empire and created a new crisis which was resolved only by a fresh settlement in 1914.

The Manchus presumed that the Convention was a recognition of their sovereignty over Tibet which they sought to enforce. Its first evidence was their insistence to pay the indemnity, instead of Tibet, which they succeeded in doing. Next the complacent Amban Yu Tai was removed and a stern officer Chang was appointed High Commissioner whose first act was to punish officials who had been connected with the negotiations to ease Indo-Tibetan relations, and order the Tibetan officials at Gyantse not to comply with the wishes of the British Commissioner there as the Chinese were to act as intermediaries. His policy was to assert "Chinese sovereignty to the exclusion of all local autonomy." Steps were taken to enforce control over Tibetan administration, train troops, promote education, develop agriculture, mining, industry, improve communications and reform government so as to put it on a better basis. The result was that soon Tibet was being turned into a district directly administered by Chinese officials. This led to insurgence in eastern Tibet to control which Chinese troops were sent there. When Dalai Lama returned from Peking, he found his capital practically besieged by the Chinese. His appeal to Foreign Powers bore no fruit and the Indian Viceroy failed to render him any help. Hence he along with two ministers slipped away from Lhasa and by rapid marches eluding his pursuers he crossed the frontier into India, and reached Darjeeling about the end of February 1910 where he was treated by the Government of India "with high consideration." Dalai Lama sought British help for otherwise the Chinese would oppress the people, destroy the Lamaist faith and establish their direct administration in Tibet, which was then under military occupation. He wanted the Government of India to have an arrangement with Tibet similar to that with Nepal. Meanwhile Dalai Lama had been deposed by the Chinese, and shorn of his temporal powers, while more and more

troops from Peking were inducted in Tibet. The British Government made a stout protest in Peking demanding respect for the Anglo-Tibetan Convention, trade privileges and restoration of autonomy in Tibet. The Manchu empire in its last gasps of existence did not have the strength to defy the British, but before any decision could be taken, the empire was dead and China was in the throes of a revolution led by Sun Yat Sen. A republic was established with Yuan Shih Kai as its president. The Chinese troops in Lhasa grew mutinous, people rose against them and disaffection grew against the new government, which led to its fall. Several months of hard fighting failed to restore peace. The Chinese efforts to re-establish control and treat Tibet as an integral part of the republic, having seats in the National Assembly met with dismal failure. A new High Commissioner was sent from Peking with a force, but the Tibetans opposed him stoutly and forced him and his men to leave the country and then the last of the Chinese troops marched out of Lhasa by January 1913.

Meanwhile the British Government declined to recognise Chinese suzerainty over Tibet or to admit the right of China to intervene in its internal administration. They protested against the maintenance of an unlimited number of Chinese troops either at Lhasa or in Tibet generally. They demanded a written agreement on these lines before granting recognition to the republic. All communications with Tibet by way of India also were closed and they would not be opened without an agreement being concluded. These measures forced the Chinese to bow down and yield to British pressure in the face of internal difficulties and international developments. Dalai Lama also refused to have any accommodation with the Chinese authorities and told the Amban in unambiguous terms that the old relationship between China and Tibet would not be possible any more and insisted that for negotiations between the two the presence of a third party was essential. He desired that both should request the British Government to act as an intermediary. He wrote "Our future policy will be based on the outcome of discussions between ourselves, the Chinese and the British". Hence by an agreement on 12 August 1912, the Chinese decided to leave Tibet and restore Dalai Lama to his position. He returned to Lhasa in January 1913.



On his insistence for a tripartite conference and British demand for a fresh treaty, the Chinese notified their willingness to discuss the Tibetan problem. Thus a Conference was called at Simla which met on 13 October 1913 under the Chairmanship of Sir Arthur Henry McMahon, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, who in effect became the arbiter between China and Tibet and ultimately dictated the terms in the absence of agreement between the two other parties.

The demands put forth by Tibet and China were so divergent in nature that a compromise between the two was impracticable. While the Tibetans wanted freedom to manage their internal affairs themselves and external affairs with reference to the British, the Chinese demanded that Tibet should be regarded as an integral part of China, though the latter would not convert it into a province. The Tibetans did not want the Amban, were averse to Chinese suzerainty and demanded full independence. The Chinese insisted on having their Resident with an armed force of 2600 men and conduct of Tibetan foreign and military affairs under their direction. There was dispute about boundaries as well. No settlement being possible with mutual accord, McMahon proposed a plan on 17 February 1914, which came to be the basis of settlement to which the delegates affixed their signatures on 3 July 1914. By this plan, Tibet was to be divided into two zones, inner and outer Tibet. Chinese suzerainty was recognised over the whole of Tibet, but outer Tibet (the portion known later as Tibet) was to be autonomous, and the Chinese and British governments agreed to respect its territorial integrity and abstain from interference in its administration which was to be conducted by the Tibetan government at Lhasa. Into this region China was forbidden to send troops or civil or military officers except a Resident at Lhasa with an escort of not more than 300 men. In inner Tibet, the Chinese could have their administration, the Dalai Lama having full control in matters affecting religious institutions. Tibet would not be converted into a province nor be represented in the National Assembly. The British pledged themselves not to annex Tibetan territory or station troops or officers or establish their colonies therein. But special British interest in the existence of an effective government and maintenance of peace and order in this neighbourhood of Indian

frontiers was recognised, as also their right to have trade agent at Gyantse and have access to Lhasa. Preferential treatment was to be accorded to British commerce and all differences relating to this Convention were to be referred to them for equitable adjustment. This settlement was signed by the Chinese when the threat was made that the clauses relating to their interests would be deleted and it would be signed by Tibetan and British delegates only. It was then initialled by the Chinese delegates on 3 July 1914, though later the Chinese government refused to sign it and did not accept the initialling by their delegates as acceptance of the Convention. There was an additional agreement relating to the north-eastern boundary of India which was known as McMahon Line. Thus in 1914, autonomy of Tibet was fully assured and continued to be in effect for the next few decades without any objection being raised to the authenticity of the document. The British attitude was unequivocally stated by Grey on 10 July in the House of Commons. According to him the sole object of the Simla Convention was to restore China's position in Tibet as it prevailed before 1906 which was one of unreal suzerainty only. He also threatened the Chinese that any resort to aggressive policy in regard to Tibet would have disastrous consequences for them. It will be evident from this brief narrative that India had a special interest in the maintenance of integrity and independence of Tibet which was essential for its security. The British Government however, for its own interest and because of the fear of international complications recognised Chinese suzerainty, and thereby perpetuated a fiction despite the reluctance of the Tibetans to submit to it. Till 1949, no change was visible in the status or position of Tibet and no danger to Indian interests occurred.

## *Constitutional and Administrative Reorganisation*

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The Revolt of 1857 acted as a catalyst in the demise of the East India Company and formal assumption of direct responsibility for the government of India by the Crown of the United Kingdom. The Charter Act of 1833 had only authorised the Company to carry on the administration of India for another twenty years in trust for His Majesty's Government. And the Act of 1853 had merely permitted this position to continue for an indefinite period. Hence when the great revolt occurred shaking the whole fabric of imperial structure, the entire blame for the eruption of disaffection and dissatisfaction with the governmental machinery and its functioning was thrust on the Company. Naturally public opinion in an overwhelming measure denounced the then prevailing system of dual control, as exercised by the Court of Directors and the Board of Control, which represented the Cabinet, and demanded assumption of entire responsibility for the governance of India by the Parliament and the Cabinet accountable to it. Thus even before the flames of the revolt had been completely extinguished, the Royal Proclamation announced the change, the Crown formally taking over the "government of the territories in India", till then administered in trust by the East India Company. The Queen called upon the Indian subjects to bear allegiance to her and submit to the authority of the persons appointed to administer the government of the country. All civil and military officers and persons were confirmed in their services and the Princes of India were

assured of scrupulous maintenance and observance of the treaties and engagements made with them by the Company. She assured the people of state neutrality and non-interference in the matter of religious beliefs and observances and equal and impartial protection of law. The people of India irrespective of their race or creed were also assured of free and impartial admittance into public services for the "duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability and integrity, duly to discharge". Soon after this assumption of direct government of India by Her Majesty the Queen, the Parliament enacted the Government of India Act of 1858 for the better government of India.

During the year 1858 three Bills for the purpose were moved in the Parliament. The first was introduced by Viscount Palmerston in the House of Commons. In his speech he gave reasons for this move. He referred to the amazing fact of a vast country populated by a nation far advanced in civilization being acquired "not by the power of a nation as a nation, but by an association of individuals, by a mercantile community", and the incongruity of consigning "to the care of a small body of commercial men the management of such extensive territories, such vast interests, and such numerous populations" by a nation well versed in "the principle of popular representation." He pointed to the objectionable character of an arrangement by which the functions of "government are committed to a body not responsible to Parliament, not appointed by the Crown, but elected by persons who have no more connection with India than consists in the simple possession of so much India stock". Hence it was essential that "the executive functions of the Indian Government at home" should be completely assigned to the ministers "responsible to Parliament and the public for every part of their public conduct". The Bill was mainly aimed at the "change in the administrative organisation at home" in London and did not affect the system of government and its structure in India. As such the changes proposed in the constitution of the governance of India were of a very limited nature. All that the Act introduced was "to make the responsible advisers of the Crown answerable for the Government of India." Henceforth the functions of the Court of Directors and the Court of Prop-

rietors of the East India Company were to cease, and in their place was to be substituted "a President assisted by a Council for the Affairs of India." With the fall of Palmerston ministry, the Bill also lapsed and finally another Bill, not different in character as far as the principle underlying it was concerned, was introduced in the Parliament. Lord Derby in moving its second reading in the House of Lords on July 15, 1858, reiterated that it was not for the "better government of India" though it might tend towards that object, but was directed towards "the improvement of the machinery by which, in this country, Indian Government may be superintended and controlled." All that was intended was the "transfer of the nominal as well as the real authority" of the government of India "directly from the Company to the Crown, and the affairs of India should thenceforth be conducted in the name of the Crown." In this matter also the change was only nominal for even earlier all important matters were decided by the President of the Board of Control who was one of the ministers. Henceforward there was to be a Secretary of State for Indian affairs assisted by a Council named India Council. The Act defined the composition of the Council and the qualifications of its members. The Bill as finally adopted thus represented the consensus of opinion among the parties in Parliament and brought about a change which ultimately had immense impact on the character of the entire range of administration in India.

The Government of India Act was made effective on 2 August 1858 when it received royal assent. By it all territories in the possession of the East India Company, and all rights vested in it, became vested in Her Majesty and were to be exercised in her name. All revenues of India, tributes and other payments were to be received in the name of Her Majesty and "disposed of for the purposes of the Government of India alone." This power was to be exercised by one of the Principal Secretaries of State who was to be paid out of the Indian revenues. A Council of fifteen members styled the Council of India, seven of whom were to be elected from the Court of Directors and the rest appointed by the Crown, was also constituted. An important condition was that the persons so elected or appointed "shall have served or resided in India for ten years at the least... and shall not have left

India more than ten years next preceding the date of their appointment." They were to hold office during good behaviour and could be removed from office by Her Majesty upon "an addresss of both Houses of Parliament." Their salary was fixed as one thousand two hundred pounds a year and they were to get a pension of five hundred pounds on retirement after ten years of tenure. All this expenditure was to be borne out of Indian revenues. The main function of this Council was to "conduct the business transacted in the United Kingdom in relation to the Government of India and correspondence with India." However all orders, communications or despatches were to be signed only by the Secretary of State who was to have final voice in all questions decided by the Council except in matters which required majority of votes in the Council. These related to finance. The Statute laid down that "the expenditure of the revenues of India, both in India and elsewhere, shall be subject to the control of the Secretary of State in Council; and no grant or appropriation of any part of such revenues or of any other property...shall be made without the concurrence of a majority of votes at a meeting of the Council." Apart from this restriction the Secretary of State was empowered to take action in urgent matters, or those involving secrecy without submitting them to the Council. Regulations for admissions to the civil services were to be made by the Secretary of State in Council as also for the divisions and distribution of patronage and power of nomination to several authorities in India. An important provision of the Act was that "except for preventing or repelling actual invasion of Her Majesty's Indian possessions, or under other sudden and urgent necessity, the revenues of India shall not, without the consent of both Houses of Parliament, be applicable to defray the expenses of military operation carried beyond the external frontiers of such possessions by Her Majesty's forces charged upon such revenues". All orders directing the actual commencement of hostilities also required communication to the Parliament. Thus "orders concerning the levying of war or the making of peace or the treating or negotiating with any prince or state", marked secret were to be sent by the Secretary of State alone" without any notice or reference to the Council". Appointments of

Governor-General and Governors of presidencies were to be made by Her Majesty's Government, while members of the Councils in India were to be appointed by the Secretary of State in Council. All naval and military forces of the Company were transferred to the Crown. The Secretary of State, as a member of the British Cabinet, was vested with supreme power, subject to Parliamentary control, for the government of India, the members of the Council of India were to act only as "valuable advisers of the new minister". It had no power of initiative and the Secretary of State, as Verney Lovett has put it, being a member of the Cabinet, was not bound to take into confidence any person except when he wished to consult them. The principle governing the change under the new Act was that, as Derby put it, "the government of India must be on the whole carried out in India itself", and there should be minimum of interference with the government here, consistent with the responsibility vested in the Parliament for the administration of India.

The Act of 1869 made an important change in the mode of appointment and tenure of the members of the Council of India. All the members were henceforth to be appointed by the Secretary of State and were to hold office for ten years, and not on good behaviour as provided by the Act of 1858. In 1876 again the Secretary of State was authorised to appoint upto three members "having professional or other peculiar qualifications", which enabled him to have three specialists in the Council. Finally in 1907, the number of members was fixed at not less than ten and not more than fourteen. Their term of office was seven years and their salary was reduced to one thousand pounds from twelve hundred. Though a merely advisory body, its control over the finances made the Council of India often a powerful check on the unlimited authority of the Secretary of State. There were naturally different assessments of the character of the Council and its role in administration. Sir Charles Wood who continued to hold office of the Secretary of State for seven years in a period when considerable reorganisation was effected in the governance of India and measures of far reaching importance were being initiated, felt that a Secretary of State who "honestly discharged his duties would never experience the slightest

difficulty with his Council". His successor Lord Cranborne depreciated the "tutelage in which the Secretary of State was held by his Council". He resented any control and desired that entire responsibility should rest with the Secretary of State. His successor Duke of Argyll was "absolutely supreme in financial as in other matters" and had the right to overrule his Council whenever he thought fit to do so. In 1880, in a discussion in the House of Commons, the view eventually taken was, as Verney Lovett has stated, "to impose constitutional restraint on the powers of the Secretary of State with respect to the expenditure of money, but by no means to extend the effective assertion to this restraint to all cases, especially where imperial questions were concerned", as the view of the Cabinet must ultimately prevail. The Council exercised absolute control over expenditure which was often wholesome as protecting the Indian revenues from extravagance. The Indian public opinion was, however, critical of the role of the Council and held it responsible for the aggressive and reactionary nature of administration. The Congress called for its abolition. It was an unnecessary encumbrance if it failed to exercise any restraint on the Secretary of State and a nuisance if it thwarted him at every step. In 1907 Morley introduced two Indians into its membership namely, K.G. Gupta and Syed Husain Bilgrami, but that did not materially affect its character. A third Indian was added in 1917. Being largely composed of retired officials it was mainly conservative in character and wholly out of tune with the rising national spirit in India.

The India Council held weekly meetings and worked through seven Committees which were not competent to take any decisions by themselves. The jurisdiction of the Council extended to "all matters relating to the appropriation, sale, or mortgage of revenues or property ; loans and contracts; alteration in salaries of the highest posts and in the furlough and sick leave rules of all government servants; regulations for distributing between the various authorities in India the power of making appointments in India; and the appointment of Indians to posts reserved for members of the Indian Civil Service", which required decision by a majority vote of the Council. The Secretary of State had a right to address secret despatches to the



Governor-General and these were not to be submitted to the Council. Other matters, not of a secret nature, unless urgent, were placed before the Council but the Secretary of State was empowered to dispose of them without reference to the Council, if it was felt necessary, only making a communication to it and giving reasons for his choice. The Council had absolute control over matters involving finance, but here also, in actual practice, its role was merely passive. Matters involving war or defence policy and foreign relations were mainly determined by the British Cabinet and in such a case the vote of the Council was merely formal. So also the strength and distribution of the armed forces were matters for decision by the Cabinet on the advice of the War Office and the Council was mainly registering an expense involved. In many other cases, owing to the character of British Government, of which the Secretary of State for India was a member, and it was responsible to Parliament, even where its statutory powers were involved, the Council merely acted as a confirmatory body and had little influence on the policies followed. In the period before 1920, when imperial interests dominated government policies, any obstruction by the India Council was impracticable. The Secretary of State was generally free to act on his initiative in other matters also and he actually did so. To sum up, in the words of an Indian writer, "the Council had no influence whatever on policy; in matters of administration not directly connected with revenues, expenditure, and high appointments, it was only an advisory body; the members were the constitutional advisers of the Secretary of State selected by him for that purpose because of their experience and expert knowledge; but he was bound by their advice only in those matters of administrative detail, involving expenditure of revenues, etc." The legislature had designed this body "to safeguard the interests of the people of India; the Government of India was to be spurred on by it to measures of progress, civilisation and prosperity; the Secretary of State was to be restrained by it from any encroachments upon the rights of the people of India and their revenues." But the Council was too weak to fulfil this function and it was by its composition ill fitted to adopt that role. There is no wonder that Indian public opinion was critical of it, considered it a waste of Indian resources and asked for its abolition from time to time.

Under the constitution sovereignty over India was reposed in the Crown and Parliament of England. We may now examine how and whether Parliament to which the Government of the United Kingdom was responsible, exercised its authority of supreme control in respect of the administration of India. Theoretically all action was taken in the name of the Crown which included Parliament, but in practice, as long as the ministry retained the confidence of Parliament and was not thrown out, the Cabinet and through it the Secretary of State for India acted as the supreme authority in governing India. Parliament, which broke its slumber every twenty years to make a thorough enquiry into the administration of India by the East India Company before 1858, relapsed into a perennial sleep after the transfer of power to the Crown. Though it was the sovereign authority its control over government in India was "loose and spasmodic". The interest taken by the Parliament in respect of legislation or finances of India was negligible; and resolutions passed by it on Indian affairs were accorded little respect by the government in India or England. The position was aptly summed up by Montague and Chelmsford in their report when they wrote "we have no hesitation in saying that the interest shown by Parliament in Indian affairs has not been well-sustained or well-informed." Thus till 1919. Parliament let Indian affairs drift and be managed by the ministry through the Secretary of state for India which enjoyed its confidence at the moment. However, as a ritual every year the Indian budget and report of its administration were presented to the House of Commons. The debate on it, as commented by Montague, was "a purely academic discussion which had no effect whatever upon events in India, conducted after the events that were being discussed had taken place". Such a debate was generally held almost at the fag end of the session and before empty benches only. During the years of the first world war, even this formality was dispensed with. Some members moved that the salary of the Secretary of State be placed on British Estimates, but not till the passage of the Government of India Act 1919, this mode of exercising control on the activities of the India Office was made possible. There was another reason for the relative indifference of Parliament to Indian affairs and policies

implemented. It was the understanding between the official party and the opposition to treat matters relating to India outside British party politics. This made the Secretary of State virtually an autocrat, the Grand Mughal, whose actions remained unchallenged.

Parliament exercised its supremacy only through the ministry in power, which reflected the majority opinion in the legislature, and the fact made the Secretary of State, though theoretically subordinate to Parliament, free to take action in matters vitally affecting the interests and finances of India. Imperial interests alone were responsible for the despatch of Indian troops to China, Malta, Egypt, South Africa, East Africa, France, Dardenelles or Mesopotamia outside Indian frontiers and the expenditure was debited to Indian revenues, despite the inhibition imposed by the Act of 1858. The adoption of forward policy, leading to the second Afghan War and the series of engagements and military operations on the frontiers in the north west or the east as also war in Tibet and Burma, involved huge expenditure of Indian revenues, without the Parliament even stirring itself on behalf of the Indian people whose trustee it professed to be. Only after the Afghan War, not for the sake of India, but as a result of political exigencies in England, did the Parliament denounce the action of the Conservative Government, but did little to relieve the Indian exchequer of the burden involved. Later, the Tibetan policy of Curzon came in for criticism in the Parliament and amendments in the treaty were made, but there was no relief to India. An important incident which produced much noise in the Parliament was the military failure in Mesopotamia and the discussion on the report of the Mesopotamia Commission, which had censured the Secretary of State, the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief, on an adjournment motion. The character of the Government of India, which was termed wooden, came in for strong condemnation, which compelled the government to take definite action. Apart from this instance, the resolutions by private members and questions which they put from time to time, were normally ignored by the ministry and had little impact on Indian administration. It is not possible here to discuss all these. A few illustrations would suffice,

In 1889 on the initiative of W.S. Caine and S. Smith the House of Commons passed a resolution directing the Government of India to discourage intemperance and modify their excise policy. But beyond information being furnished to Parliament, no change was made in the policy in India and excise revenue continued to rise from year to year. Also resolutions were passed condemning the Government of India for its opium policy, but beyond the appointment of a Royal Commission on the subject, which reported in 1895, no change had occurred in the policy or its implementation. Similarly the resolution in 1893 asking for simultaneous examination being held in England and India for the Indian Civil Service passed by the House of Commons met with the sublime indifference of the Government of India which took no steps to give effect to it, rather arrayed hostile opinion against the measure. Dadabhai Naoroji's resolution praying for the expenses on the "employment of Europeans in the British Indian Service", and on "military and political operations beyond the boundaries of India" to be borne by British Exchequer was counter-acted by the appointment of Welby Commission which did not report for the next five years, nor recommended any "fair and equitable" distribution of expenditure on Indian and British revenues. On the contrary, Parliament was more alive to the interests and sentiments of Lancashire manufacturers whose lobby exercised disproportionate influence on the House of Commons. Their demand for the repeal of import duties on cotton goods in 1877 which was given effect to some time later, and again in 1896, their objection to the import duties on cotton goods led to imposition of countervailing excise duty on Indian manufactures, reveal the character of British rule and the futility of expecting any parliamentary action in the interest of Indian people. Parliament's supremacy was nominal and formal, the entire power was exercised by the British Cabinet whose chief agent was the Secretary of State for India with whom rested the ultimate control of Indian administration. The consequence of the Act of 1858 was to place "India under an autocratic executive", the Parliament only exerting itself on rare occasions on behalf of the people of India.

Before we come to the government in India, it may be

partinent here to analyse the powers of the Secretary of State and how these operated in the period before 1920. He combined in himself the powers exercised formerly by the Board of Control and the Court of Directors as their heir besides representing the supreme authority of the Parliament and the Cabinet. Thus he was vested with "full power and authority to superintend, direct and control all acts, operations and concerns which in any way were related to or concern the Government of India", as well as "all grants of salaries, gratuities and allowances and all other payments and charges whatever, out of or upon the" revenues and property of India. The latter power was exercisable only with the concurrence of his Council, which as shown earlier, gradually came to be the creation of the Secretary of State and largely operating merely as an agency to endorse his decisions in matters affecting imperial interests. This superintendence assumed a new character after 1860, when owing to advance in the means of communication between Calcutta and London, particularly with the laying of the cable and operation of steamboats through the Suez Canal, contact between the two wings of government became very close. Telegraphic orders could be conveyed from London to the Governor-General within a day, and letters also did not take more than a fortnight. Thus what used to be an *ex post facto* decision in the days of the Company, largely criticising an act and expressing pious hopes for future conduct on the lines suggested, developed into close examination of current affairs and previous communication of orders and instructions for the determination of any policy or action. All matters, whether they related to foreign policy, war or peace, or matters of internal government were subject to constant control by the Secretary of State and the Government of India was converted virtually and in fact into a subordinate government functioning under the direction of the Secretary of State. In 1870 when Mayo asserted freedom of Indian legislature in the matter of making laws, the Secretary of State enunciated the principle which governed the relationship between the superior and subordinate governments. He reminded the Viceroy of the principle "that the final control and direction of the affairs of India rests with the Home Government, and not with

the authorities appointed and established by the Crown under Parliamentary enactment in India itself...The Government established in India is (from the nature of the case) subordinate to the Imperial Government at home. And no government can be subordinate unless it is within the power of the Superior Government to order what is to be done or left undone, and to enforce on its officers, through the ordinary and constitutional means, obedience to its directions as to the use which they are to make of official position and power in furtherance of the policy which has been finally decided upon by the advisers of the Crown. Neither can I admit that it makes any real difference in the case if the directions issued by the Imperial Government relate to what may be termed legislative is distinguished from executive". In North-brook's time the principle of control over financial policy was asserted, as the Secretary of State was responsible to Parliament however shadowy it might have been. Later in 1894 the Secretary of State again, on the principle of the "united and indivisible responsibility of the British Cabinet" in respect of Indian administration, whether executive or legislative, stressed full obedience by the members of the Governor-General's Executive Council to the orders issued by the India Office. They were bound. it was asserted, in case of difference between their viewpoint and that of the Secretary of State, after recording the opinions if they think fit to do so, either to act with the government or to place their resignations in the hands of the Viceroy.

The Secretary of State exercised unlimited powers of direction and control in matters of executive administration which is borne out by frequent communications, both official and private, from him to the Governors General. In respect of foreign relations, while leaving considerable discretion to the Government of India, the Secretary of State kept a close watch on the policies and principles which governed them. Salisbury determined the policy of the Government of India towards Afghanistan in spite of North-brook's opposition, and through instructions given to Lytton regulated the course of action towards that state. The later censure of Lytton's action and the arrangement made with Amir Abdur Rahman Khan

by Ripon came from the Liberal Government in England. At every step in the days of Dufferin and Lansdowne, the Secretary of State had the final say in Afghan matters, and Lansdowne was almost dictated in his policy towards the Amir and the Durand Agreement which followed. Even a headstrong Viceroy as Curzon had to bow before the decision of the Secretary of State, in his relations with both Afghanistan and Tibet, and conform to the primacy of imperial interests even against his better judgment. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 was essentially an act of the British Cabinet and Minto had to abide by it, though the Government of India was not happy about it. Similarly in matters of internal administration and the course of action towards the rising wave of nationalism, the Secretary of State guided the policy of the Government of India. It was natural too to keep public opinion in Great Britain and parliamentary criticism pacified. The Secretary of State justified his interference on the ground of his responsibility to the Parliament and in view of the interest which Indian affairs excited in international circles. Thus the Government of India was practically "shorn of all power to take final decisions in legislative, financial and administrative matters by the assertion of supreme authority" by the Secretary of State. His control in the matter of superior civil services was enormous, beginning with recruitment to the determination of their emoluments and field of service. The Secretary of State was the supreme head and the Government of India was accountable to him, and there could be no digression from it as long as the Indian government was not responsible to the people here and derived all authority and power from the Parliament and the Government of the United Kingdom. Sir Tej Bahadur Saprú summed up the position as "the residuum of control, both administrative and financial exercised by the Secretary of State in relation to the Government is so enormously large that it is impossible to hold, constitutionally, that the Government of India enjoys any large measure of independence".

The government in India, as a subordinate agency, was to be conducted by the Governor-General of India in Council, in whom was vested "the superintendence, direction and control

of the whole civil and military government" of the territories and revenues of India by the Charter Act of 1834. No change was made by the Act of 1858, and this supreme authority in India continued to function without much alteration till 1947. The Governor-General was also given the appellation of viceroy, as representing the Crown of England, in 1858 which was further confirmed in 1877 when the Queen assumed the title of Empress of India, though the statute does not have any reference to it. The Governor-General was appointed by the Crown of England "by warrant under the Royal Sign Manual" which was virtually an appointment by the Prime Minister and his Cabinet in office at the time. The Governor-General was by statute directed to pay due attention to the orders issued by the Secretary of State. In India he was the "highest personage of the State", "the Government of India incarnate" and all acts were done in the name of the Governor-General in Council. There are many instances of acts in which the Governor-General personally asserted himself, and by virtue of the veto power given to him by the Act of 1793 could over-rule his Council. However ordinarily the Governor-General acted with his Council which had existed since the Regulating Act. In 1858, the Executive Council of the Governor-General consisted of four members, one of whom was to be a legal adviser. The Indian Councils Act of 1861 raised the number of ordinary members to five, three of whom must have served in India for at least ten years. One of these was a military member, a distinguished soldier, and the other two belonged to civil service. Of the rest, one was to be a financial expert and the other, the legal member, a barrister of England of five years standing. The Commander-in-Chief was an ex-officio member and the Governor-General was its president. The strength of ordinary members was raised in 1874 when a member was added for public works. This distinction was removed in 1904. Another important change was that of dropping the military member and making the Commander-in-Chief solely responsible for all military affairs in the Council. In 1910, a member was added having charge of education and sanitation. In 1907 on the recommendation of the Viceroy an Indian was appointed to the Council, the first two incumbents being legal members,



while the third took charge of education. Thus upto 1919, the Council consisted of seven members besides Governor-General. The Viceroy had charge of foreign and political department, the Commander-in-Chief that of military affairs, after 1905, prior to that there was a special military member who had control of supply and transport, ordinance, remounts, clothing, medical stores, military works and military finance including preparation of the military budget. The Commander-in-Chief till 1905, when he got absolute charge of all military affairs, was responsible for military administration, organisation and preparation for war. The other members held charge of the home, finance, legislative, commerce and industry and education departments to which a number of other subjects were attached. Changes had occurred from time to time, depending on the exigencies of administration, in the nomenclature and scope of work of the respective members, except that finance and legal matters had a distinct identity.

The ordinary members of the Executive Council were appointed by warrant under the Royal Sign Manual, for a period of five years. The only limitation on the choice of members was that three of them must have been in the service of the Crown in India for at least ten years, one must be a barrister of England or Ireland or a member of the Faculty of Advocates of Scotland, of not less than five years' standing. Mostly members were chosen from the Indian Civil Service except that specialists in finance or in commerce and industry might be selected from outside. When the Indian element was introduced in 1909, they held mostly legal qualifications for many years. Till 1859, the Executive Council worked as a board and all matters were brought before it, the members recording their opinions and decision being arrived at by a majority of votes, except where the Governor-General might choose to exercise his veto and act in his discretion, a power given to him by the Act of 1793. In such a case the parties were formally to record their views. This method of working was cumbersome, and in the growing volume of administrative work productive of delay and throwing considerable burden on the Governor-General. Canning was wholly dissatisfied with the procedure, and when he chose Wilson as a member for finance, a beginning was.

made in the departmental or portfolio system. The Indian Council's Act of 1861 empowered the Governor-General "to make rules and orders for the more convenient transaction of business" in the Executive Council. It was under this provision that Canning made rules by which departments of administration were distributed among the members of the Council, Departments had each a Secretary, Deputy Secretary and Under-secretaries. Routine matters were disposed of by the Secretary but all other matters were submitted to the Member of the Council in charge of the department, with the opinion of the Secretary. The member could pass final orders on his own authority, or reserve them for submission to the Governor-General. By personal consultation or otherwise most of the matters were thus disposed of between the two of them; but where either of them considered the matter of such importance as to call for further discussion, or related to more than one department or more than one province, where the provincial government was to be over-ruled or fresh legislation or a new departure would be involved, it was submitted to the whole Executive Council. Its decision was then final unless vetoed by the Governor General; instances of such a veto were not very numerous. This Government of India, thus constituted, was the "supreme authority in which was concentrated responsibility for every act of civil as well as military government throughout the whole area" of British India (Simon Commission Report). A question has been debated often whether the Executive Council of the Governor-General approximated to the Cabinet of England. Sapru has argued this point in his book on the Indian Constitution, and has opined that while in theory its responsibility is collective, and it must act as a united whole, its decisions might represent the "views of only a section of it". As in the Cabinet, the decisions represent a compromise, yet Sapru believes that "the compromise arrived at in the Executive Council does not necessarily imply that the principle underlying a particular measure is accepted by all the members composing the Council". Moreover, the decisions were not always taken independently but they were generally "influenced by the expression of the opinions of the Secretary of State". It had been laid down by the Secretary of State that the

members must endorse such orders or resign. Therefore the Executive Council could not function except within the framework of a policy prescribed by the Secretary of State.

The Government of India, while charged with the supervision, direction and control of the administration of the whole of India, had reserved for its direct administration only a limited number of subjects having pre-eminently an all-India import. Amongst the important subjects retained by the Government of India for its direct administration were foreign affairs, defence, general taxation, currency, debt, tariffs, posts and telegraphs, railways and accounts and auditing. Internal administration was, however, carried on under the supervision of the Government of India and as a delegated power, by the provincial governments called local governments or administrations. Among the main subjects entrusted to such governments were police, civil and criminal justice, prisons, assessment and collection of revenues, education, medical and sanitation, agriculture and irrigation, public works like roads and buildings, forests, municipal and district boards, etc. Maintenance of law and order and constructive activities as public education, health and economic development, both agricultural and industrial, along with relief measures at the time of natural calamities like famine, were primarily looked after by the provincial administrations. Initially, with the commencement of British rule in India, the evolution of administration began in the three presidencies, each independent of the other and directly accountable to the Court of Directors in London. It was only after 1774 that a central authority began to evolve and by the Act of 1834, it assumed its full stature, controlling every aspect of administration of the whole country. The three presidencies of Bombay, Madras and Bengal encompassed within themselves all the territories held by the East India Company. The Act of 1834 had provision for the establishment of a fourth presidency of Agra, which, however, was reduced to the North-west Province administered by a Lieutenant Governor. In 1854 the province of Bengal was separated with a Lieutenant Governor, and subsequently were created the provinces of Punjab, Assam, Central Provinces, Bihar and Orissa and many minor administrations under Chief Commissioners. In

1918 the whole of British India was partitioned into fifteen major and minor provinces. These were Madras, Bombay and Bengal, each governed by a Governor in Council, and had an Executive Council and a Legislative Council, Bihar under a Lt. Governor but having both the Executive and Legislative Councils; United Provinces, Punjab and Burma with a Lt. Governor and a Legislative Council; Assam and Central Provinces under a Chief Commissioner with Legislative Councils; and British Baluchistan, North West Frontier Province, Delhi, Coorg, Ajmer and Andamans each having a Chief Commissioner only. The status of a province depended on the status of its head. While the three Governors' provinces were on the top rung of the ladder, those under a Lt. Governor occupied the middle stage, the Chief Commissionerships standing on the lower rungs. The Governors had also an Executive Council to help them, but the Lt. Governorships of the major province like United Provinces and Punjab had no such paraphernalia. The Governors were appointed by the Crown under a Warrant and were generally selected out of the public men in England, the Lt. Governors and Chief Commissioners were appointed by the Governor-General with the approval of the Secretary of State and were chosen from the ranks of the Civil Service in India. There was little difference in the extent and scope of control exercised by the Government of India in respect of provincial administration. Nonetheless the Governors of Madras and Bombay continued to enjoy the privilege of direct correspondence with the Secretary of State, a vestige of the regime of the Company, and also had the distinction of officiating as Governor-General during his absence from India.

Seeds of centralisation were sown by the Regulating Act of 1773 when the Governor-General of Bengal was entrusted with power of superintending and controlling the government and management of the presidencies of Bombay and Madras in matters relating to declaration of war or making peace with any Indian ruler or negotiating any treaty. The Governors were enjoined to pay due obedience to orders received from the Governor-General and transmit to him "advice and intelligence of all transactions and matters.....relating to the government, revenues or interest" of the Company. This supervisory autho-

rity of the Governor-General was further enhanced in 1793 by clearly denoting its scope which comprehended war, peace, collection or application of the revenues as well as to the armed forces employed and civil and military government of the presidencies. The beginnings then made in centralisation found consummation in the Act of 1833, which vested the superintendence, direction and control of the whole civil and military government as well as revenues of whole of India in the Governor-General of India in Council. This supreme government was further solely vested with entire legislative functions for all the inhabitants and courts of justice in the whole of British Indian possessions. Full control over finance was also vested in the Government of India and the local governments were debarred from incurring expenditure beyond the limits imposed by the Supreme Government. Thus in law, the Government of India was possessed of complete legislative and financial powers and the authority to supervise and direct the administration of the provinces. After 1860, however, limited legislative authority was restored to provincial governments when legislative councils were established there, and certain financial powers were also granted to them, by the Government of India as a measure of economy and for facility of administration. The range of such decentralisation will be discussed later. It may suffice here to state that till the passing of the Government of India Act of 1919, in theory and practice the Government of India, as provided by law, had supreme authority to control and direct the administration of provincial governments which exercised only delegated authority and were subject to its supervisory and superintending powers. And it was inevitable in the existing subordination of the Government of India itself to the Secretary of State to whom it was wholly responsible, and was "in strict financial subordination" to him. Verney Lovet has rightly stated the position. He writes that the Secretary of State "watched the expenditure of Indian revenues as the ferocious dragon of the old legend watched the golden apples. Held in such rigid subordination, expected to keep down provincial charges, sharing in provincial proceeds, controlling provincial taxation, the Central government could not effectively decentralise finance". Similar was the position in legislation as every law in its various stages of

passage through the legislatures required previous assent of the Secretary of State. In administrative matters, at a time when Indian affairs excited attention of the public opinion both in England and outside, and when the Indian press and public opinion was growing progressively critical of governmental policies and measures, the Secretary of State kept close vigil on the affairs of India. It was unlikely in such a situation for the provincial governments to be entrusted with independence or discretionary powers, outside the ken of the Government of India which was charged with peace and stability in India. And as long as there was no machinery for popular control over government in India, it was natural that the entire administration must be directed and controlled by the Government of India and the Secretary of State as being accountable to the Parliament and people of the United Kingdom. Thus till 1918 centralisation of government was a fact and bureaucratic over-centralisation was the chief characteristic of government in India. Faint glimpses of relaxation came into view by the Act of 1919, which introduced an element of partial responsibility of the executive to the legislature, whose evolution began with the Act of 1861. We may now review the growth of legislative councils, their composition and powers and their real nature in the context of relationship with the executive wing of the government.

From the beginning of British rule in India, the executive government exercised legislative functions. The Governor-General and Council of Fort Wilkiam as well as the Governors and Council of Bombay and Madras made regulations, having force of law, for maintenance of law and peace and for realisation of taxes and land revenue from the people. Legislation did not differ from executive functions and no separate agency or special procedure was provided for law-making function. The theory of separation of powers propounded by Montesquieu in the eighteenth century had no effect on Indian practice. In 1834, however, a notional distinction was made by the appointment of a fourth member to the Governor-General's Executive Council, who was empowered to take his seat only when the Council considered matters of legislation. Thus legislative activity found a nominally distinct agency for

its exercise, but there was no change in the principle that in India legislation was a prerogative of the executive authority. In 1854, largely as a result of protests by the presidency governments that the interests of their people suffered in a system of centralised legislation, a Legislative Council was associated with the Government of India, as an adjunct to the Executive Council. Besides the Governor-General and the four ordinary members of his Council, provision was made for the appointment of one official by each of the four provincial governments, and two judges of the Supreme Court to be associated with the Governor-General's Council for law-making purposes, and this enlarged council was to be known as the Legislative Council. It was merely an adjunct of the Executive Council and legislation was not divorced from executive function. The intention of its creator, Sir Charles Wood, was "to give to the Council the assistance of local knowledge and legal experience in framing laws". But the new organ abrogated to itself functions and powers of a parliament, with standing orders, and seeking "redress of grievances and engaged in discussions", calling for papers to be submitted to it, thereby impeding business, causing delay and diverging from its legitimate functions of helping to improve laws. In the opinion of Sir Lawrence Peel, the Council "has no jurisdiction in the nature of that of a grand inquest of the nation. Its functions are purely legislative and are limited even in that respect. It is not an Anglo-Indian House of Commons for the redress of grievances, to refuse supplies and so forth". Yet this Council indulged in all these and gave cause of serious concern to the Governor-General. It was presumptuous on the part of the officials, without any popular support, drawn from the ruling class, to sit in judgment on the government to which they were subordinate. A change in its character became imperative. At the same time, the Revolt of 1857 clearly indicated that absolute exclusion of Indian element, even in respect of legislation, and complete neglect of Indian public opinion were dangerous for the stability of alien rule, conducted by a bureaucracy different in race, language, feelings and customs from the subject population and directed from a centre thousands of miles away from the seat of government in the

country and wholly unfamiliar with the needs and sentiments of the people. Some form of association of the people became essential. These two factors dictated alteration in the composition and functions of the Legislative Council. The Indian Council's Act of 1861 was framed by the Parliament and the Government of the United Kingdom to cater to the altered circumstances for as Wood pointed out it was "quite impossible to revert to a state of things in which the Executive Government alone legislated for the country".

This measure was characteristic of the caution with which the British Government proceeded in reorganising the system of government in India soon after the Revolt. Without in any manner affecting the powers and prestige of the Government of India or minimising the supremacy of the executive, a feeble beginning was made in the direction of introducing representative system in the machinery of government. Sir Charles Wood made it clear that his intention was to subordinate the legislature to the executive. He stated, "I feel it therefore, necessary to strengthen the hands of the Government, so as to enable them not only by veto to prevent the passing of a law, but to prevent the introduction of any Bill which they think calculated to excite the minds of the native population". He emphasised that "it behoves us to be cautious and careful in our legislation". Every care was taken so that the Council might not turn into a debating society, but to confine itself to the sole purpose of 'making laws'. Unlike the Legislative Council formed under the Act of 1853, which was composed wholly of officials, provision was made in the 1861 Act for inclusion of non-officials in the new Councils, both at the Centre and in the provinces, but care was taken to maintain preponderance of European element in it, as among the non-officials, both British and Indian gentlemen were to be nominated. The Secretary of State favoured the admittance of "native chiefs to cooperate with us for legislative purposes", and for many years, the Indian members of the Legislative Council were drawn from among the ranks of rulers of states and big landlords.

Under the Act, the Legislative Council of the Governor-General was remodelled and power to make laws was restored to the provincial governments. It was enacted that "For the



better exercise of the power of making laws and regulations vested in the Governor-General in Council, the Governor-General shall nominate, in addition to the ordinary and extra-ordinary members (of the Executive Council) such persons, not less than six nor more than twelve in number, as to him may seem expedient, to be members of Council for the purpose of making laws and regulations only, and such persons shall not be entitled to sit or vote at any meeting of Council except at meetings for such purpose, provided that not less than one half of the persons so nominated shall be non-official members". The Governor-General was to preside over its meetings and in his absence, the president nominated by him or some senior member of the Executive Council was to act on his behalf. The Council was barred from transacting any business "other than the consideration and enactment of measures introduced in the Council for the purpose of such enactment". A further limitation was imposed that "without the previous sanction of the Governor-General no measure could be introduced in the Council which affected (1) "The public debt or public revenues of India or by which any charge would be imposed on such revenues; (2) the religion or religious rites and usages of any class of Her Majesty's subjects in India; (3) the discipline or maintenance of any part of military or naval forces; (4) the relations of the Government with foreign Princes or States". The Governor-General was further empowered to give his assent or withhold if from any bill passed by the Council or reserve it for consideration by the Crown. Moreover the Governor-General was authorised in case of emergency to issue ordinances with validity for six months. The laws thus made by the Central Legislative Council were to operate all over India.

To meet local needs of the two old presidencies of Bombay and Madras and the new provinces which were created or might be created, the Act of 1861 made provision for establishment of legislative councils there. In the presidencies the Governor's Executive Councils were to be expanded for legislative purposes only by the inclusion of additional members, whose number was to be not less than four nor more than eight besides the Advocate-General or a similar officer.

In Bengal a Legislative Council was established in 1862 and in the North West Provinces of Agra and Oudh in 1886. The proportion of non-official members was to be not less than half, which was to comprise both Indian and European elements. Apart from law-making the Council could transact no other business. There was a further limitation on the powers of the provincial councils. Without the previous sanction of the Governor-General, they could not consider any law or regulation which affected the public debt of India, or the custom duties or any other tax or duty in force or imposed by the authority of the Government of India for the general purposes of the government. Further more they were prohibited from considering any measure affecting currency, posts and telegraphs, Penal Code of India, religion or religious rites of the people, discipline of troops, patents or copyright and the relations of the government with foreign princes or states. The laws passed by the provincial councils had to obtain assent of the Governor-General for being valid. Practice also developed for seeking the previous sanction of the Secretary of State before the introduction of a bill in the Legislative Councils and even for any changes which might be made therein in the course of discussion. Thus was initiative taken to associate Indians with the process of legislation, mainly to have the benefit of their "better knowledge and understanding of the opinions, sentiments and prejudices of the people", and "to learn how projected measures were likely to strike Indians and how they could be modified so as to suit them better". The Councils under the Act of 1861 were described by Macdonnell as mere "committees for the purpose of making laws, committees by means of which the Executive Council obtains advice and assistance in their legislation". These laws, according to him, were "in reality the orders of Government", because "the Councils are not deliberative bodies with respect to any subject but that of the immediate legislation before them. They cannot inquire into grievances, call for information or examine the conduct of the executive. The acts of administration cannot be impugned, nor can they be defended in such assemblies, except with reference to the particular measure under discussion". And the Indian members were drawn from the

upper classes including chiefs, nobles, landlords, rich merchants, lawyers and loyal editors of conservative papers, who were by their very nature unable to represent the Indian enlightened opinion or the interests of the poverty stricken masses. Dr. Tara Chand writes, "To call their membership a 'recognition of the Indian right to participate in the government of their own country' sounds like mockery". This first experiment in representative institutions, however, failed to achieve that purpose and naturally provoked bitter comment from the emerging nationalist opinion in India, and demand for reform in the Councils became progressively vocal. The political organisations in Calcutta, Poona, Bombay or Madras as well as the Indian newspapers voiced the feelings of the educated middle class and demanded expansion of Legislative Councils and extension of their powers. The Indian National Congress took up the theme from its very beginning and pressed for reform at its annual meetings.

The new Legislative Councils, being "merely enlarged advisory committees of the Executive Councils for purposes of enacting laws", with a sprinkling of Indian membership drawn from the states or from the land-owning classes, failed to pacify Indian opinion. Events in the seventies and eighties of the nineteenth century, with famines recurring every five years, and distress growing among the people, Indian princes resenting increasing interference in their affairs, and deteriorating international position, the Vernacular Press Act and agitation regarding Ilbert Bill, made it evident that in the then state of uneasiness of the people, the prevailing system of autocratic government would aggravate discontent further. Of course, the rulers felt confident of their position with a strong armed force of nearly 2,00,000 men to fall back upon; but anxiety marked the thinking of many English-men who were sensitive to the rumblings beneath the surface. Press and political conferences were creating a psychology of dissatisfaction at the exclusion of Indians from the corridors of power and denial of representation to them even in the matter of legislation. Hence Hume pleaded with the Government for "greater regard" being paid to the "opinions and wishes of our subjects" in administration. Cotton pointed to the embitterment of educated Indians

at their "expulsion from power"; "deliberate neglect of assurances" and the contemptuous manner and the insolence with which Europeans treated them, but all such pleadings were spurned aside. In 1881, Viceroy Ripon's suggestion that an elected element be introduced in the legislative councils, as that would help the government in ascertaining the views of the public, was turned down. The attitude of the British Government was however one of ridicule at "a Baboo Parliament" and emphasis on the absurdity and impracticability of change. They made an effort to wean away the Muslims from the main current of Indian politics and used for this purpose Syed Ahmad Khan, through Beck, the Principal of M.A.O. College, Aligarh. But the rising tide of agitation and the welling demand for political reform could not long be ignored. Dufferin, despite his conviction that a "microscopic minority" of educated Indians could not be left in control of administration, and his aversion to introduce "effective representation of the people" proposed reform in a despatch to the Secretary of State in 1889, so as "to liberalize the provincial councils" by conceding the principle of election in choosing their members. He made clear that it was impossible for the supreme government or the Government of India "to divest themselves of any essential portion of Imperial authority". But in his view the time had come for "associating with themselves (Government) in the task of administration, a considerable number of persons 'selected and elected' from the educated classes to place themselves in contact with a large surface of Indian opinion, and thus to multiply the channels by which they could ascertain the wants and feelings of the various communities for whose welfare they were responsible". But there was no response from the Secretary of State. The next Viceroy Lansdowne also pressed for reform, but Cross could not contemplate granting representation to what he termed the Babus, as that "step would be fatal to our rule in India".

However, demand for representative legislatures was mounting in India. The Indian National Congress advocated it demanding half the members to be elected and right of interpellation and to discuss the budget. Even the Anglo-Indian opinion as expressed by the chambers of commerce,

wanted greater opportunities to be afforded to the people to ventilate their grievances and the government to explain its policy. The Government of India was also not averse to such an advance. Meanwhile Charles Bradlaugh introduced a bill on the subject. Simultaneously the Secretary of State also moved a bill in the House of Lords in 1891. But both these bills were crowded out by other parliamentary business. Ultimately a bill was moved by Cross, the Secretary of State, in 1892 which became law. Presenting the bill in the House of Commons, Curzon, the Under Secretary of State, explained its purpose as being "to widen the basis and expand the functions of the Government of India, to give further opportunities than at present existed to the non-official and native element in Indian society to take part in the work of government, and in that way to lend official recognition to that remarkable development both in political interest and capacity which had been visible among the higher classes of Indian society since the government was taken over by the Crown in 1858". Curzon admitted that the existing councils were "subject to restrictions and limitations" and "were in no sense of the term Parliamentary bodies". He called them merely "deliberative bodies with a comparatively narrow scope", and therefore "the Government was denied the opportunity for explaining policy and for replying to hostile criticism or attack". The non-official element was also deprived of opportunity to ask for information, state grievances and be acquainted with the policy of the government. Dufferin had therefore recommended that the Budget should be submitted to the Council every year not for being voted upon but for affording opportunity for full and free discussion and "thorough criticism and examination of the financial policy of the Government". He also favoured the right of interpellation being granted to the members. Curzon referred to the endorsement of these proposals by Lansdowne who also recommended "enlargement of representation of the public in India by an addition to the number of the Members of the Council and by some extension of the present system of nomination". The bill as placed before the Parliament made three vital changes. One was the "concession of the privilege of financial criticism",

the second was that of interpellation and the third was increase in the numbers. And Curzon unequivocally added that in the matter of selection of the non-official members, the method of election was not ruled out.

The new Act marked an advance on the earlier one, not in the vital matter of conceding popular control over the executive government, but in affording to the members of the Councils, both of the Supreme Government and the provinces, opportunity to express the non-official view on the financial policy of the government as well as seek authoritative expression of its attitude on matters of public interest. During thirty years since the passing of the Act of 1861, the budget could be discussed only on sixteen occasions when new legislation was called for. Otherwise the budget was circulated in the form of a pamphlet and no comments could be made on it. By the new Act discussion of the budget came to be a regular annual feature, though without in any manner affecting its character or any of the demands. The discussion was intended merely as a guide to government in framing its financial policy in future, though there was no guarantee that it would bring about any alteration in the nature of the demands. Curzon felt that by this concession "the interests of finance would gain by this increased publicity and the stimulus of a vigorous and instructive scrutiny", and thereby "sound economic administration of India" would be secured. In the next fifteen years or so, the non-official members generally indulged in healthy criticism of financial policy. The other important advance was the right of interpellation given to the members. They could now ask questions on administrative policy, but it was open to the government to answer them or not, and when the answer had been read, there could be no further questioning as the right to put supplementary questions was not granted. Both the privileges were further subject to rules and regulations to be made by the Governor-General and provincial governors, and these were generally stringent. The third important point about the Act was the enlargement in the membership of the Councils. In the Legislative Council of the Governor-General, the number of additional members was to be not less than ten nor more than sixteen, and in

Bombay and Madras not less than eight and not more than twenty. For Bengal the maximum number was fixed at 20, and for North-Western Provinces and Oudh 15. The Act provided for rules being made by the Governor-General in Council with the approval of the Secretary of State in Council regulating the "conditions under which such nominations" might be made. There was general demand in India for introduction of elective system in the matter of appointment of members, but it was conceded only indirectly. Lord Kimberley, the Secretary of State, had admitted that the clause relating to rules for nomination of additional members, admitted of a certain portion of their "being chosen by election", and Curzon emphasised that "it would be in the power of the Viceroy to invite representative bodies in India to elect or select or delegate representatives of themselves and of their opinions to be nominated to those Houses," and by this means he thought "by slow degrees, by tentative measures", there would be approximation to the elective principle. Direct election by the people was barred out. Only certain interests were to find representation, and Curzon enunciated these as "the association of Zamindars of Bengal, the Chambers of Commerce of India, the Municipalities of the great cities, the Universities, and perhaps the various religious denominations in the country." When rules were framed, the Governor-General's Council had ten non-officials, elected by the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce, a European body, by the non-official members of provincial Councils and some others chosen by the Governor-General with a view to afford due representation to all classes. The provincial councils included non-officials nominated on the recommendation of the University, groups of municipal corporations, groups of local district boards, large land-holders, and associations of merchants, manufacturers and tradesmen. Thus was the concession of election granted which was a mockery of the term. But as long as representative government was not intended nothing better might be expected. It was made clear in the Parliament by Curzon that "the time had not come when representative institutions, as we understand the term, could be extended to India." Such an arrangement was termed by the Viceroy Lansdowne as "a radical change in the character

of the Legislatures.” He defended the denial of elective system on the ground that “in many parts of India, any system of election was foreign to the feelings and habits of the people, and, were we to have recourse to such a system, the really representative men would probably not come forward under it.” Hence representation was given to “types and classes rather than areas and numbers.” The intense Indian demand for election was refused on the too familiar ground that by this method the real people, who were the illiterate masses and the martial people, will be left out and only the microscopic minority of English educated middle class urban population will be represented. However the evil of communal representation found a soil for its germination in the rules then framed.

Meanwhile, political movement in India was growing in intensity and it was edging towards extremism. Dr. Tara Chand writes, “undeterred by official contumely and antagonism the political movement continued to gather strength and grow in volume. The Indian National Congress met from year to year and focussed the people’s attention on the basic defects and temporary lapses of the Government. Political conferences were convened in the Provinces and repeated the resolutions of the Congress. Political associations in all parts of India held meetings and reiterated the criticisms. Newspapers in English and in the Indian languages propagated the views of the nationalist leaders. Political literature poured out of the presses and flooded the country, while numerous political workers addressed audiences in large and small groups to rouse the political consciousness of the people”. Economic condition was fast deteriorating which was ascribed by the nationalists to the continuous severe drain of wealth from India. This debate “was carried on in ever-widening circles from the Press and the platform... till it became the fixed conviction of the whole of India”, and added further to the strengthening of political consciousness. That poverty was the result of foreign rule and the “excessive costliness of the foreign agency”, was consistently emphasised. Gokhale drew attention to this “moral evil”, the “dwarfing or stunting of the Indian race”, the “atmosphere of inferiority” which were an essential consequence of the absence of the



element of self-government. The famines of the last decade of the nineteenth century and the onset of the bubonic plague in all its ferocity, and the repressive measures adopted by the governmental agencies to check it, further aggravated suffering and afforded stimulus to the rise of extremist movement, then fathered by Tilak and Aurobindo Ghosh. This process was considerably helped by "the flood of religious revivalist sentiment" and "the feeling of pride in the past and self-respect" which was inspired by the triumphant visits of Swami Vivekanand to the West. The incarceration of Tilak and the harshness with which the extremist leaders and the revolutionaries were treated created further embitterment and gave rise to the terrorist movement in Bengal and other places. Curzon's rule poured oil into the flames and his partition of Bengal led to agitation for self-government. The Congress adopted in 1906 the resolution for Swaraj which became the new war-cry. Swadeshi and boycott were the two weapons which were widely employed to fight bureaucratic repression which assumed formidable dimension in the first decade of the century. It was evident that in the existing temper of the people, and the deteriorating international situation, the administrative system and the legislative machinery introduced by the Act of 1892 would fail to pacify the rising storm. Repression had failed to crush the popular spirit and Moderates were fast losing their hold on public mind. It was in these circumstances, that Minto, the Viceroy, and Viscount Morley, the Secretary of State, when the Liberal Government came to power in Britain, hatched the project of constitutional reform which assumed the form of the Indian Councils Act of 1909.

In the Indian National Congress and among the Moderates, three specific demands were emerging into prominence to afford to the Indians "a large share in the control of administration". One of these was for direct representation of the provinces in the House of Commons, which, however, did not catch much attention. The second demand which gathered momentum was for larger representation in the Legislative Councils and the right to vote on financial matters. The third was for appointment of Indians elected by non-official members of the Legislative Councils to the Council of the Secretary of State and

the Executive Councils of the Government of India and those of Madras and Bombay. In 1906, Minto, realising the need for some change, placed certain suggestions for discussion before his Council, and these included "increased representation" on the Legislative Councils, "prolongation of the budget debate, with power to move amendments" and "the constitution of a council of princes". As in Dufferin's time, so Minto also emphasised the danger inherent in a system of ordinary elections, "which might exclude representatives of important communities", and among these he pointed to "the hereditary nobility and landed classes, the trading, professional and agricultural communities and the European planters and commercial classes". Meanwhile a Muslim deputation had been received by the Viceroy and assured of protection to its special interests and position as a community. The scheme of reforms which was to sweeten the pill of repression met generally with satisfactory response from the Secretary of State, and was enunciated by Minto in the Legislative Council in 1907. Along with changes in the structure and functions of the Legislative Councils, the Viceroy had also proposed the formation of an Imperial Advisory Council, consisting of a number of Chiefs and substantial land-holders. So also were to be provincial advisory councils comprising representatives of smaller land-holders, industry, commerce, capital and professional classes. This part of his scheme, however, fell through and the one which was later presented to the Parliament was for enhancement of powers of the legislature, enlargement of their membership and greater representation to interests. Morley also wanted Indians as members of Executive Councils, though it did not form part of the Bill. On 1 November 1908, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Queen's proclamation, King Edward in his message announced extension of representative institutions and in December 1908 the Bill was introduced in the House of Lords by Morley.

The Bill was largely based on the recommendations made by the Government of India in the Reform Despatch of 1 October 1908 with such modifications as were suggested thereupon by the Secretary of State in his despatch of 27 November 1908. The proposals made therein related to "the enlargement of the

Legislative Councils, and the extension of their functions to the discussion of administrative questions". The strength of the Imperial and Provincial Councils was to be more than doubled, because of the "the unanimity of the feeling in favour of a large council", which the Governor-General in Council considered "inevitable and desirable" because of "the rise in the standard of general intelligence, and the universal desire for a greater share in the management of public business". Minto had recommended equality of officials and non-officials with a casting vote for the Governor General or the Governor or Lieut-Governor who was to preside at the meetings of the Legislative Council. This reservation was deemed to be essential as "under existing constitutional conditions the Government cannot resign", hence "it must be able to settle the Budget and procure supplies for the service of the country; and it cannot divest itself of the power to give effect by legislation to the decisions of His Majesty's Government". For the central legislature his proposal was for 63 members, 31 officials and 31 non-officials besides the Governor General. Similar equality of proportion between non-officials and officials was recommended for the Provincial Councils. Morley, however, believed that, in view of the importance of maintaining undiminished "Imperial supremacy" and the necessity "to ensure its (the Government's) constant and uninterrupted power to fulfil the constitutional obligations that it owes, and must always owe, to His Majesty's Government and to the Imperial Parliament", "a permanent official majority in the Imperial Legislative Council is absolutely necessary". He, however, wanted to dispense with overwhelming official majority in the Provincials Councils. As to the composition of the Councils, the principle then accepted was that of granting "representation to all classes that have reached a sufficiently high level of education, the land-holders, the Mahomedans, the professional middle class, and the commercial community, both Indian and European. Election was to be the method for securing such class representation. The Government of India also recommended enhancement of the functions of the Legislative Councils, which included the right to move resolutions, put questions and discuss the budget. As regards the first, the Government of India wanted

the members to "have opportunities for placing their views on public questions before the Government", which would benefit both the educated public as well as the Government. For, "such discussions would give the Government an opportunity of making their view of a question known, and of explaining the reasons which led them to adopt a particular line of action." This right was not to be uninhibited, and for that purpose the resolutions were to be "in the form of recommendations to the Government". The defence advanced for this course was the "constitutional position...that the decision must in any case rest with the Government and not with the Council". In case of non-acceptance the Government was to explain reasons for its decision. Moreover there were to be restrictions regarding the powers of the provincial legislature as had been initially enunciated in the Act of 1861. To repeat, these related to public debt, customs, imperial taxes, coins, bills and notes, post-office and telegraph, altering the Penal Code; religion; army and navy; patents or copyright; foreign relations". The Imperial Council was also barred from taking up certain subjects which were defined later in the schedules to the Act. On the subject of interpellation, the Government of India did not suggest any change from 1892, but the Secretary of State was prepared to allow supplementary questions being put by the member giving notice of the question. The most important recommendation, however, related to the discussion of the budget, for which a detailed procedure was laid down, both for the Imperial and provincial councils. The Government of India wrote, "We are clearly of opinion that it is advisable that the councils should be afforded increased facilities for expressing their views upon the Budget, and that these facilities should be given at a sufficiently early stage to enable the Government to take advantage of any advice that may be tendered, and to adopt and give effect to such suggestions as may be found practicable. The ultimate control must, however, rest with the Government, and no useful purpose would be served by affecting to ignore this essential fact. It is the Government and not the Council, that decides any question arising on the Budget, and the utmost concession that can be made is to give the Council ample opportunities of making recommendations to the Government in

respect of particular items". With this limitation the Council was "empowered to record its opinion by vote on the greater part of the Budget proposals"; but certain items of revenue and expenditure were excluded from its purview. By these means the Government of India proposed to concede to various classes "the novel right of moving resolutions, and dividing the Council on administrative questions of public and general interest, and of taking part in settling the actual figures in the Budget, both by informal discussions and by bringing forward specific recommendations which will be put to vote". The Government of India claimed that it was "an attempt to give India a constitution framed on sufficiently liberal lines to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the most advanced Indians, whilst at the same time enlisting the support of the more conservative elements of Indian society". The Secretary of State generally agreed with the Despatch and the Bill was the result of it.

The Indian Councils Act 1909, as has been mentioned earlier, provided for the introduction of three major changes in the existing structure of Legislative Councils. The first was the expansion of these Councils numerically as well as introduction of a form of indirect elective system. The two other items were the concessions in the matter of budget discussion and the privilege of putting supplementary questions, at the discretion of the Governor General, who was to preside over the legislature at the centre or the Governor or Lieut. Governor in the provinces. By the schedules attached to the Act, the strength of the Governor-General's Council was fixed at 60 additional members, besides the members of the Executive Council and the Governor-General himself. Of these thirtythree members were to be nominated and twentyseven elected. Of the nominated members, not more than twentyeight were to be officials, three were non-officials, one each was to be chosen from the Indian commercial community, Mohammadans of Punjab and landholders of Punjab. Two might be specialists dealing with the subject under discussion. The twentyseven elected members were to consist of 12 elected by the Provincial Councils, one by the District Councils and Municipal Committees of the Central Provinces, six, one each, by the land-

holders of the provinces of Bombay, Madras, Bengal, United Provinces, Bihar and Orissa and Central Provinces, six elected one each, by the Mohammadan community of the provinces of Madras, Bombay, Bengal, United Provinces and Bihar and Orissa, and one member each by that Chambers of Commerce of Bombay and Bengal, which were European bodies mainly. Thus an official majority of sufficient margin was retained at the Centre. But no such provision was made in the case of the provincial councils, whose number was fixed at fifty each for Bombay, Madras, Bengal, and United Provinces and thirty each for Punjab and Burma. Bihar and Orissa when separated had fortyfive members, the Central Provinces, twentyfive and Assam twentysix. Besides nominated members, among whom officials were also included, the elected, not in a majority, were to be elected by municipal bodies, district boards, Universities, landholders, Mohammedans, Chambers of Commerce, planters, etc. These differed from province to province, but generally local bodies, Universities, Mohammadans and landlords found representation, through a system of indirect election through electoral colleges specially formed. Morley's suggestion for a common electoral college of Hindus and Muslims for choosing Muslim representatives did not find favour with the Indian Muslims and the vicious principle of separate electorates for Mohammadans was accepted and perpetrated in the country. The elected non-official members could by no stretch of imagination represent the people, but only that of the class which had elected them, except that through local bodies, Universities and provincial councils, the educated middle class could find admission into the new legislatures. Qualifications for membership and for voters were laid down by regulations and limited the electorate to a small figure. Females, minors and persons of unsound mind were not granted the right of franchise and restrictions were imposed on the persons seeking election, the age was fixed at twentyfive years or above.

To such councils, where the nominated element, though not official, predominated in the provinces, was the power of moving resolutions on matters of public interest and discussing the budget and moving resolutions on it, along with the right of

interpellation was given. However, in the Central legislature, official majority was not dispensed with, as it was deemed necessary to safeguard imperial interests and the autocratic nature of administration carried on by a pre-dominantly foreign bureaucracy. The Act extended the power of interpellation to the facility of asking supplementary questions by the member who had given notice of original question. Both the rights of interpellation and of moving resolutions were hedged in by certain restrictions, laid down in the Act of 1861. The regulations did not permit the Imperial Legislative Council to discuss, whether by resolution or in the course of discussion on the budget, any matters which related to stamps, customs, assessed taxes, tributes from Native States, court fees and fines, army, marine, military works, interest on debt, ecclesiastical, political, railways, and purely provincial revenues and expenditure. The provincial councils were barred without previous sanction of Governor-General, from taking into consideration any law affecting public debt, customs duties or any other tax or duty for the time being in force and imposed by the authority of the Governor-General in Council, for the general purposes of the Government of India, or regulating currency or postal or telegraph business or altering in any way the Indian Penal Code, or affecting religion or religious rites or usages, affecting the discipline or maintenance of Naval or Military forces, or dealing with patents or copyrights or the relations of the government with foreign princes or states. These reserved subjects covered most of the important matters, but such reservation was inevitable in the existing constitutional position of the supremacy of the British Parliament and His Majesty's Government in Indian affairs. The regulations also laid down the procedure for budget discussion, which afforded, according to Morley, "to the representatives of Indian opinion a part in the most important administrative operation of the political year". These concessions amounted to the extension of time for discussion of the budget, before and not after it was finally settled as well as the right to move resolutions and to divide the Council on them. In the central legislature, the financial statement was presented on a fixed date on which day no discussion was possible. On a subsequent date the state-

ment was taken into consideration and members were permitted to move resolutions relating to any alteration in taxation, new loan or grants to Local Governments. When these resolutions had been disposed of, the government after taking into consideration these proposals, introduced a revised statement, known as Budget, which was subject to general discussion but could not be put to vote. In the provincial councils the one main difference in the procedure was the appointment of a finance committee consisting of twelve members, half officials and half elected non-officials, to consider the budget before it was submitted to the Government of India. This revised budget as approved by the latter was then placed before the Legislative Council and passed through the stages as in the case of the Central legislature. The entire procedure was intended to afford a chance to Indian public opinion to put forth its point of view before the government which had the final say in the determination of its financial policy and imposing burden of taxes on the people. The budget as such was not subject to the vote of the members of the Legislative Councils and thus lacked the consent of the people.

The reforms of 1909 were, as mentioned in the Government Resolution, aimed at "giving to the peoples of India a larger measure of political representation and wide opportunities of expressing their views on administrative measures". The Prime Minister also referred to the possible effect of this measure. He said that the provisions of the Act were "moderate in their scope, calculated to associate gradually but safely more and more the people of India with the administration of their own affairs, and consistent in every respect with the maintenance of our Imperial supremacy". He also said that while it might not meet the aspirations of the moderates in India, "it is a step which will avert the serious danger which has been confronting us for the last few years." It is evident from the Act and the Regulations made thereunder that the main object was "to secure a more effective representation of important interests", and not to lay down the foundations of representative government. Morley announced most unambiguously to calm conservative apprehensions, "if I were attempting to set up a Parliamentary system in India, or



if it could be said, that this chapter of reform led directly or necessarily upto the establishment of a Parliamentary system in India, I, for one, would have nothing at all to do with it". Parliamentary system, which implied representative government, was not Morley's goal. No representation was accorded to the people, but only to "classes, races and interests". The purpose was to associate representatives of some classes and communities with legislative function to ascertain their views, though not with the object of necessarily moulding administrative and legislative operations of the government. It is no wonder that a halting measure as this could not pacify the growing political agitation which exhibited no symptom of abating. The extremists found no solution of their demand for self-government and there was nothing in the reform scheme which could divert the revolutionaries from their path of sedition to win independence. The moderates viewed the new scheme with some favour initially but they were also disillusioned soon. The communal representation and separate electorate, along with the concession for the Muslims to contest general seats also, brought dissatisfaction to the Hindus and even the Congress criticised this aspect of the reforms, for, as Malviya exclaimed, "this is protecting the interests of a minority with a vengeance". The proposals as implemented failed to break the "chain of violence, repression and more violence". These were a mere palliative and did not afford any answer to Indian political problems, as was acknowledged in the Montague-Chelmsford Report. Only the Muslim League was satisfied, though the muslims in general were soon disillusioned. It may, therefore, be said that the reforms failed to meet the aspirations of the people, as they were not intended to bring about any radical change in the character of government or make a beginning, however moderate, in the march towards representative government, parliamentary system and freedom of the country ultimately. The position could not be otherwise, for, as stressed by the Simon Commission, "as long as no portion of the final responsibility" resided in India and "all parts of it rested upon Whitehall and Westminster", any other constitutional change was not practicable other than giving to the Councils

“increased opportunities of influencing policy by moving resolutions and asking supplementary questions”, as provided by Minto-Morley reforms.

The paltry concessions introduced by the new Act had little impact on the trend of extremist political movement, and there was no abatement in the vehemence of revolutionary terroristic activities. At the same time, in the words of Dr. Tara Chand, “a new combination of forces was rising”. Industrialists and businessmen allied themselves with the educated and professional groups in their own interest, so also were the “traditional cultural classes” as well as the “labourers, peasants and artisans”, prepared to swell the stream of agitation and take interest in the independence movement in the expectation of ending “the domination of foreigners over Indian life and society” and “fostering Indian culture” and ending “the colonial economic exploitation”. The Nationalists were not reconciled and while Extremists rejected them, the Moderates also found the reforms unsatisfactory ultimately. There was a radical change coming over the Muslim opinion which was growing gradually anti-British owing to the Pan-Islamic movement and the increasing drift of Turkey towards Germany whose hostility to Great Britain was mounting day by day. In this situation, absolute adherence to the policy of repression allied with separating the Muslims from the Hindus was infructuous. It was apparent that until Bengal partition was annulled and steps adopted, however slow, towards transfer of responsibility to the representatives of the people peace would not prevail. Hence Crewe, the new Secretary of State, contemplated redistribution of the eastern provinces, in which view he found support from King Edward, who was keen to receive his Imperial Crown in India, and do “something which would, to some extent, satisfy that section of opinion in India which regarded partition as a mistake”. Hardinge, the new Viceroy, despite his initial distaste to the proposal, soon veered round to this view and proposed annulment of the partition along with the shift of capital from Calcutta to Delhi. It was in that context that the Viceroy, in his Despatch of 1911, pointed to the course of future direction of political progress. He wrote “In course of time, the just demands of Indians for a larger share in the Government

of their country will have to be satisfied and the question will be how this devolution of power can be conceded without impairing the supreme authority of the Governor-General in Council. The only possible solution of the difficulty would appear to be gradually to give the provinces a larger measure of self-government, until at last India would consist of a number of administrations autonomous in all provincial affairs, with the Government of India above them all and possessing power to interfere in case of misgovernment, but ordinarily restricting their function to Imperial concern." The despatch when published on the eve of the Delhi Darbar in December 1911 immediately caught the imagination of the moderate political leaders who read into it the promise of provincial autonomy, which in their eye meant introduction of responsible government in the provincial sphere, and they pressed for its early fulfilment. The Extremists had not wavered in holding liberty as their goal, but at the moment they were unable to assert themselves. There was a furore in British conservative circles and Crewe was compelled to denounce the interpretation put on the statement by the Indian politicians, and declared that the statement referred merely to further decentralisation of control from the Government of India to the provincial governments without in any way intending to subordinate them to popular control. The explanation was illogical and ignored the circumstances in which the despatch was written and published. It was granted as a 'boon' to pacify public resentment and to point the finger towards the path which constitutional development in India would take. Provincial Autonomy thus became the political cry of the time. Later elucidation by Hardinge that his words referred to the principle of decentralisation, increase in the number of Indians in public administration and permanency of British rule in India were devoid of conviction, as also his observation that "colonial self-government on the lines of British dominions is absolutely out of the question." Henceforth however, representative government, making the executive responsible to the elected legislature, and thus to the people, was adopted by the Nationalists as the goal to aspire for.

During the disturbed period after the partition of Bengal, to suppress the rising wave of nationalism and terrorism, imperia-

lism took its stand on the two planks of repression and divide and rule policy by alienating Muslims from the Hindus. But both these methods failed to fructify, and in consequence, as Dr. Tara Chand has rightly stated, cracks were visible "in the existing system of Government of India...both imperialist philosophy and autocratic administration proved inadequate in solving the new spirit in India". Repression brought about "a psychological change of great magnitude in India. The Indian mind threw overboard the heavy load of imperial awe and prestige. The youngmen by their daring and sacrifice removed the miasma of the efficacy of the chastising power of Government, the defiant attitude of those who were condemned to death, imprisonment and exile, blunted the edge of the weapon upon which Government relied. The nationalist movement stirred the country from one end to the other". Repression made martyrs and their blood nourished the plant of nationalism. The Hindu-Muslim separatism also proved to be of short duration. The reversal of the partition of Bengal and the growing estrangement of Turkey from the western allies following in the wake of the Balkan Wars, turned the younger section of Muslims away from the loyalist creed of the Muslim League. They lost faith in the British promises when the settled fact of the partition was unsettled by Hardinge and Crewe in 1911. A change also occurred in the character of the League itself which soon passed into the hands of the younger leaders like Jinnah and Mohammad Ali, with whom was closely associated the Ulama class, which did not hesitate to ventilate the cause of Turkey and advocate united action with the Congress to oppose British imperialism. Thus in the years following the commencement of the Minto-Morley Reforms, terrorism did not abate, rather it was strengthened by the support it received from abroad. The murder of Jackson in Nasik, Ashe in Tinnevely, attempt to bomb the train carrying Minto on his visit to Ahmadabad and finally the hurling of a bomb on Hardinge on 23 December 1912, on the occasion of his formal entry into Delhi, the new capital of India, which inflicted serious injuries on him, proved that repression had miscarried in its purpose. In the next few years, particularly during the period of the Great War, there was regular smuggling of arms from beyond the

seas, and the loyalty of Indian troops was being undermined so as to organise a general rising in India simultaneously with Turco-German invasion through Afghanistan. The activities of Har Dayal in the United States and Germany, the presence of Mahendra Pratap, Obaidullah and others in Kabul were directed towards winning the support of these powers for the Indian cause. Thus both revolutionary sentiment and Muslim alignment with the nationalist programme shook the self-confidence of British rulers and prepared them for change in their stand towards India, and adopt a new policy of conciliating the irreconcilables.

In this setting, the Muslim League and the Congress, whose ranks were soon closed by the re-entry of the Extremists within it on the return of Tilak from his long imprisonment in Mandalay, came closer to each other. Self-Government within the Empire was the goal of both of them. Soon began the meeting of the two bodies at the same place, almost simultaneously, so much so that in their Lucknow session in 1916, a common scheme of constitutional reforms was adopted by the two of them, which became the national demand. Immediately before the Lucknow session, and almost as a preliminary to the communal settlement and the Congress-League scheme of reforms, nineteen elected members of the Central Legislative Council submitted their Memorandum outlining the plan of constitutional reforms. To a large extent these recommendations were similar in their content and objective. There was also the Political Testament of Gokhale issued soon before his death in 1915. All these schemes were based on the principle of Provincial Autonomy, which had become the battle cry of the nationalists after the publication of Harginge's Despatch of 1911. Gokhale considered the grant of Provincial Autonomy to "be a fitting concession to make to the people of India at the close of the War". He wrote, "This will involve the two fold operation of freeing the Provincial Governments on one side from the greater part of the control which is at present exercised over them by the Government of India and the Secretary of State, in connexion with the internal administration of the country, and substituting on the other, in place of the control so removed, the control of the representatives of tax-payers through Provin-

cial Legislative Councils". Thus Provincial Autonomy comprised the twin process of continuing further provincial decentralisation which had commenced in 1870 and making the provincial governments thus freed partially from the control of the Government of India and through it to the Secretary of State, responsive to the sentiments of the people and responsible to their elected representatives in the Legislative Councils. Gokhale contemplated an Executive Council of six members, of which half would be Indians, to be associated with the Governor and a Legislative Council of seventyfive to hundred members of whom not less than four-fifths would be "elected by different constituencies and interests". The sphere of the activities of the Legislative Council was to pass laws, and give assent to "additions to or changes in provincial taxation. The Budget too will have to come to it for discussion; and resolutions in connexion with it, as also on general administration, will have to be given effect, unless vetoed by the Governor". The provincial government thus formed would have complete charge of internal administration and its finances would be separated from the central. In Gokhale's scheme the Government of India was to depend on provincial contribution for its solvency. He also proposed reorganisation of the Government of India with a Legislative Assembly, of one hundred members, having an official majority in it, and having "reserve power in connection with provincial administration". He also envisaged relaxation of control by the Secretary of State. It was a modest plan of constitutional development in keeping with the realist moderation of its author.

The Ninteen Memorandum was, however, more elaborate and spelled out the essential features of the scheme of reforms which the nationalists then contemplated. The Minto-Morley Reforms had proved inadequate and the non-official majorities in the provincial legislature had "proved largely illusory" owing to the bloc of Europeans and nominated non-officials, and "gave no real power to the representatives of the people". In their view, and they gauged the situation correctly, "the Legislative Councils, whether supreme or provincial, are at present nothing but advisory bodies without any power or effective control over the Government, Imperial or Provincial."

Hence they failed to attain the object outlined by the Prime Minister in 1909 that they would cease to be "mere automata, the wires of which were pulled by the official hierarchy." The Memorandum also drew pointed attention to the Arms Act, disqualification about joining Volunteer Corps, exclusion from commissioned ranks in the army, absence of any share in the government of the country, as well as the treatment of Indians in the British colonies and Dominions, which had made the position of the people of this country humiliating and one of inferiority. It referred to the unstinted support given by the people and rulers of India to the British cause in the Great War and their expectation of rising from the status of subordination to "one of comradeship." Thus there was need for a change in the angle of vision, for India demanded a government that "is responsible to them". Hence the constitutional plan must be based on "real and effective participation" of the people in the government of their country. And to this end these proposals were directed. The Nineteen wanted half the members of the Executive Councils to be Indians and the removal of the condition that some of them must have served in the public services, and recommended that the Indian members should be elected by the elected representatives of the people in the Legislative Councils. As regards the latter they suggested that these "should have a substantial majority of elected representatives" and the franchise should be broadened and extended directly to the people with adequate representation to the minorities. The strength of these Councils was to be one hundred and fifty at the Centre and one hundred for major provinces and sixty to seventyfive for the minor ones. They also recommended that the "Budget should be passed in the shape of money bills, fiscal autonomy being conceded to India." There was recommendation for the abolition of the Council of the Secretary of State, who should conform to the position of the Secretary of State for Colonies. Further there was emphasis on the autonomy of provinces. United Provinces and other major provinces should have a Governor with Executive Council at their head. Full measure of local self-government, relaxation of Army Act, commissions for Indians in the army were other important proposals. This Memoran-

dum was an important document which was referred to by the framers of the Constitutional Reforms of 1919.

The third of the schemes was the one adopted by the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League at their sessions in Lucknow in December 1916. This scheme of reforms, commonly known as the Congress-League Scheme, was a little more elaborate and spelt out the principles underlying the other two schemes, in some detail. Limited autonomy to the provinces and extension of the powers of the legislatures to influence the administration were the important features of these schemes. The most important provision of the Congress-League Scheme was that of determining the share of the Muslims in representation to the provincial legislatures. They were to be "represented through special electorates" and their proportion in various provinces was fixed as fifty per cent of the elected Indian members in Punjab, thirty per cent in the United Provinces, forty per cent in Bengal, twentyfive in Bihar, fifteen in the Central Provinces and Madras and one third in Bombay. The Mohammadans were deprived of the right of seeking election from other constituencies. Another safeguard was further provided that no bill or clause thereof or any resolution which affected the particular community, if opposed by three-fourths of the members belonging to it, would be proceeded with. This concession known as Lucknow Award, formed the basis of Muslim representation in the legislatures till the grant of independence. The Congress-League Scheme fixed the strength of provincial Legislative Councils at one hundred and twenty-five members for the major provinces and fifty to seventyfive for the minor ones. Four-fifths of the members were to be elected on "as broad a franchise as possible," while one-fifths were to be nominated members. The head of the government was not to preside at the meetings but the Legislative Councils were to elect their own president. Right of asking supplementary questions was not to be restricted to the original questioner, but was to be given to any other member. The provincial councils were to have "full authority to deal with all matters affecting the internal administration of the province, including the power to raise loans, to impose and alter taxation and vote on the Bud-



get." Proposals concerning expenditure and ways means were to be submitted in the form of bills for adoption by the council. Resolutions on any matter within the purview of the provincial government, including bills, subject to rules made by the Councils, were to be discussed and were to be "binding on the executive government, unless vetoed by the Governor in Council, provided, however, that if the resolution is again passed by the Council after an interval of not less than one year, it must be given effect to." Motions for adjournment on matters of public importance were also to be permitted if supported by one-eighth of the members. The Governor had the power of veto. The term of the members was fixed at five years.

The Imperial Legislative Council, it was proposed, should have a strength of one hundred and fifty members, four-fifths of whom were to be elected on the basis of a wide franchise, and the provincial councils would also return some members. Provisions relating to the president of council, supplementary questions, adjournment motions, the executive government being bound to give effect to the resolutions adopted by the Legislative Council, introduction of bills and resolutions relating to administration of the whole country and term of office, money bills and voting of the budget were similar to those relating to the provincial councils. Assent of the Governor-General was essential before a bill would become law, and the Crown was to have the power to veto any central or provincial bill within a year. The Imperial Legislative Council was to have exclusive jurisdiction in matters relating to uniform legislation for the whole of India, inter-provincial fiscal relations, questions affecting imperial revenue other than tributes from Indian states, and Imperial expenditure, except military charges, Indian tariffs, customs duties, currency and banking and grant of bounties to nascent industry of the country, and finally resolutions on all matters relating to the administration of the country as a whole. The Council was barred from interfering with "the Government of India's direction of the military affairs and the foreign and political relations of India, including the declaration of war, the making of peace and entering into treaties." The Scheme also included provisions relating

to the constitution of the Executive Council of the Government of India and the provincial governments. The heads of these governments were to be the Governor-General and Governors respectively, and there was to be an Executive Council with each of them. Half the members of these Councils were to be Indians elected by the elected members of the Legislative Councils. Their term of office was fixed at five years, and members of the Indian Civil Service were not to be appointed to them. Thus there was to be a permanent executive unaffected by the vote of the legislature and appointed by the British Crown even though the Indian members might represent the legislature. It was also proposed that the Government of India so constituted would be independent of the Secretary of State and would be vested with the limited authority of "general supervision and superintendence over the Provincial Governments." The Congress-League Scheme also pleaded for the abolition of the Council of the Secretary of State whose salary should be placed on the British Estimates. As in other schemes, in this scheme also there was reference to the admission of Indians to the commissioned ranks in the army and navy, and premission to enlist as volunteers. Equality of status with other subjects of the British Empire was also demanded. Separation of judiciary from the executive was also asked for.

All these schemes were based on the principle of making government responsive to the will and sentiments of the people through the legislatures containing preponderance of elected members. Franchise was to be extended but interests and classes were normally to be represented, so also was ensured weightage to the Muslims in representation in the councils and their right of selecting their representatives through separate communal electorates recognised. Of course, there was increase in the powers and functions of the legislatures whose resolutions were to be binding on the executive. All that it implied was that the voice of the legislature would have impact on administration; but these schemes did not contemplate introduction of responsibility of the executive to the legislature which is an essential attribute of parliamentary form of government and the supremacy of legislature and ultimately of the

people. Exclusion of subjects like foreign policy, defence and political relations from the scope of the imperial legislature was a clear recognition of dependence on the British Empire whose interests in these matters were deemed to be supreme. These proposals fell far short of the demand for independence voiced by the revolutionaries and Extremists, as these were not intended to snap the ties with the British Empire or repudiate its sovereignty. The schemes were framed by the moderate leadership and represented the consensus among them at the time. Alongside with these non-official ventures, the government was also engaged in an exercise of constitution making.

Meanwhile political movement in India was turning a new corner and agitation for Home Rule had taken roots in the country. The formation of the Home Rule Leagues by Tilak and Annie Besant and their impact on the political opinion in the country has been narrated in another chapter. It might suffice here to mention that the cry of Home Rule caught like wildfire and created a new consciousness among the people, even in rural areas. At the same time a new spirit of self-consciousness and assertion of importance of India as a member of the comity of nations, who were engaged in defeating the forces of authoritarianism and autocracy to make the world safe for democracy, was also dawning in the country. The soldiers who had seen service in Europe and had breathed in the atmosphere of freedom there grew conscious of the bonds which shackled the people of India. Seditious revolutionarism as also repression had failed to suppress it. In a situation like this it was clearly evident to the rulers that status quo would be impossible to maintain after the war and some constitutional advance must be made immediately. There was also need felt for unequivocally elucidating British aims respecting India and indicating the direction which political advance would ultimately take.

The war of 1914, in the words of Dr. Tara Chand, "worked as a catalyst to the Indian national movement. It accelerated its pace and defined its objective in clear terms." We have discussed the developments which resulted in sketching the shape of future constitution by the political parties of India. The British Government depended, for the successful prosecution of

war against Germany, on the resources of India in men and money, and was keen to deploy them. The declaration of war evoked sense of loyalty among the people and leaders of various political opinions, the Moderates and Extremists, princes, landlords and merchants, Tilak and Gandhi, all lent their weight to render utmost assistance to His Majesty's Government. Gandhi even acted as self-appointed recruiting agent. "This pro-British stance" resulted in the despatch of a large number of troops from India to various theatres of war, recruitment of 1,200,000 men and contribution of vast sums for the prosecution of war. This magnificent response surprised the British people and their statesmen, and their early reaction was one of immense gratitude to the princes and the peoples of India ; which led Robert, the Under-Secretary of State for India, to hope that there would be change in the British angle of vision about the political aspirations of India which might result in her occupying "a place in our free Empire worthy of her fighting races, and the patriotism of her sons." Austen Chamberlain asked Viceroy Hardinge, on the eve of his retirement, to submit a memorandum on the reforms which might be introduced in the Government of India after the war. The Viceroy recognised the desire for self-government as a legitimate aspiration which merited the "sympathy of all moderate men". The Secretary of State desired practical steps to be taken to meet the "increasing demand for a greater share by Indians in the administration of the country." Chelmsford, the new Viceroy, was bold enough to define British goal to be "the endowment of British India as an integral part of the Empire with Self-Government," the progress towards which was to depend on "wide diffusion of education, softening of racial and religious differences and the acquisition of political experience." The views of the Government of India were communicated in a despatch to the Secretary of State, who constituted an India Office Committee to examine the Viceroy's proposals. Chamberlain did not endorse the negative conservative recommendations, and re-iterated "our object is to develop free institutions with a view to ultimate self-government within the Empire." The ideal of self-government was stressed by Meston, who was member of small group called the Round Table. This body suggested transfer of power

in "a limited sector of administration without disturbing the structure of the Government at the Centre." At the Imperial War Conference, and the Imperial War Cabinet of which India was now a member, the Indian members, S.P. Sinha and Maharaja of Bikaner advocated India's case for constitutional advance leading to self-government. In the debate in the House of Commons on the Mesopotamia Commission report, Montague denounced the existing government of India as "too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too antediluvian" and desired that the Indians should be given "bigger opportunity of controlling their destinies by growing control of the executive itself". And when Montagu was appointed Secretary of State by the Coalition Government led by Lloyd George, he broke a new path and wanted to declare British intention to grant self-government by stages. Curzon did not favour this expression and therefore the Cabinet altered it to responsible government. In the changing international atmosphere, to appease Indian sentiments and to calm the political situation in India, the Cabinet decided to make an early declaration of their aims about India.

Secretary of State Montagu made the famous Declaration of 20 August 1917 in the House of Commons. He announced, "The policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire... I would add that progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages. The British Government and the Government of India, on whom this responsibility lies for the welfare and advancement of the Indian peoples, must be judges of the time and measure of each advance, and they must be guided by the cooperation received from those upon whom new opportunities of service will thus be conferred and by the extent to which it is found that confidence can be reposed in their sense of responsibility." This assurance was reiterated by the Viceroy in his speech of 5 September 1917 to the Indian Legislative Council. He declared most unequivocally "that the endorsement of British India as an integral part of the British Empire with self-government was the goal of British Rule, and His Majesty's Government have-

now put forward in precise terms their policy in respect of this matter." Self-government which was identified with responsible government was the objective to which by gradual stages Indian constitutional development was to proceed. The first steps were to be taken in the domain of the provincial governments. Gradualness with the British Parliament acting as judges of the measure of success of each stage and the fitness of the actors to play their part was the policy adumbrated. The first step was the enactment of the Government of India Act of 1919, which we shall discuss in the next chapter.

## *Dyarchy—The First Experiment in Responsible Government*

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The Declaration of 20 August 1917 was an unequivocal announcement of the intent of His Majesty's Government concerning the ultimate goal of constitutional progress of India. It was defined as "gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire." The final step was to be complete self-government within the Empire on the same basis as the self-governing Dominions. The main task immediately was in the words of Dr. Tara Chand, "to combine an autocratic and irresponsible executive with self-governing institutions." To devise such a system Montagu came to India, not so much in search of the mode of achieving it and gauging the public sentiment, as to canvas support for the scheme which had been adumbrated in London and which he wanted to sell to the moderate political leaders in India. Along with the Viceroy Chelmsford, the Secretary of State toured throughout the country, had discussions with the officials, both at the centre and in the provinces, met public leaders, representatives of communal and vested interests, and received memoranda from them. Subsequently a report was prepared which was published in 1918, containing proposals for the first stage of progress towards full responsible government in the distant future. In the Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms, at the outset, four propositions were enunciated which formed the basis of the proposals made. The authors were conscious of the absolute need to alter the existing system of government for they felt that the old system

had attained its final limit and "no further development is possible unless we are going to give the people of India some responsibility for their own government." Their diagnosis was correct that the "present machinery of government no longer meets the needs of time; it works slowly; it produces irritation"; and there was "wide spread demand on the part of educated Indian opinion for its alteration." But such alteration had to be gradual, each step forward being taken after a thorough examination of the successful operation of the previous stage and the fitness of the people for further advance. In their analysis, the framers of the Report realised that "The process will begin in local affairs . . . the time has come for advance also in some subjects of provincial concern; and it will proceed to the complete control of provincial matters and thence, in the course of time, and subject to the proper discharge of imperial responsibilities, to the control of matters concerning all India." It was a long drawn out process, the fitness of people for each further step being judged by the rulers, who were not prepared to relinquish their hold over India as long as it was possible to retain it.

The four formulae outlined by the authors of the Report clearly define the purpose and process of development. They opined that there were "obviously three levels at which it is possible to give responsibility to the people" and these were defined as local bodies, the provinces and the Government of India. And the principle they laid down was that "in proportion as control by an electorate is admitted at each level, control by the superior authority must be simultaneously relaxed." In their view the matters which relate to the comfort and well-being of the individual interest him more directly than those concerning the security and existence of the state. Hence their first formula was that "there should be, as far as possible, complete popular control in local bodies and the largest possible independence for them of outside control." Some effort had been made in this direction, the need at the moment was for taking it to the farthest limit. The second formula, and that was the fundamental basis of their proposals for reform, was that "The provinces are the domain in which the earlier steps towards the progressive realisation of responsible Government should be taken. Some measure of



responsibility should be given at once, and our aim is to give complete responsibility as soon as conditions permit. This involves at once giving the provinces the largest measure of independence, legislative, administrative and financial, of the Government of India which is compatible with the due discharge by the latter of its own responsibilities." It meant that the process of provincial decentralisation begun in the days of Mayo, in a limited sphere, must be taken to its ultimate length and there should be legal sanction behind it. The third formula, which inevitably followed from the basic premise of imperial responsibility was that "The Government of India must remain wholly responsible to Parliament, and saving such responsibility, its authority in essential matters must remain indisputable, pending experience of the effect of the change now to be introduced in the provinces. In the meantime the India Legislative Council should be enlarged and made more representative and its opportunities of influencing Government increased." And finally the authors laid down that "In proportion as the foregoing changes take effect, the control of Parliament and the Secretary of State over the Government of India and provincial Governments must be relaxed." On this graduated scale the experiment in responsible government was to proceed, the final stage being consigned to an undesignated future.

The first two postulates were that utmost expansion of local self-government should be taken up immediately and in the provincial sphere responsible government should be introduced progressively. It may be pertinent here to cast a glance on the stage reached in the development of local self-government and provincial decentralisation before 1918. Very early in the English presidency towns of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, municipal bodies had been formed and some non-officials had also been associated with them. After 1850 in some inland towns also municipalities had been established, largely administered by official agencies, to manage sanitary and police requirements of the localities. Subsequent to the publication of the report of the Army Sanitary Commission, some measures were taken to give effect to its recommendations. For such local purposes, cesses were raised which were mainly devoted to local needs. Meanwhile demand had grown not only for efficient

management of the civic necessities but also for greater exploitation of local resources, which otherwise might not be tapped by the government for general purposes, and associating some prominent citizens with civic administration. Lord Mayo while initiating the measure of decentralisation in provincial finance emphasised the need of associating the Indians in administration for which municipal self-government was the most promising field. Principle of election was also emphasised. He also sounded the new note of political training being imparted to the people, the only suitable sphere for which was the town whose problems intimately affected the well-being of the population. In 1870 a comprehensive scheme was introduced and legislation was adopted in some provinces leading to large increase in municipalities. In 1882 Ripon issued the Resolution "which carried still further the principles of Local Self-Government with the object, by measures cautiously but substantially progressive of inducing the people themselves to undertake, as far as might be and subject to necessary control from without, the management of their own local affairs and to develop and to create a capacity for self-help in respect of all matters that have not, for internal reasons, to be retained in the hands of the representatives of government." In his Resolution of 30 September 1881, the Governor-General in Council had felt the need for further expansion of the system introduced by Mayo's government and desired the provincial governments to examine how far they could hand over to the local bodies considerable revenues "similar in kind to many, which have long been locally managed with success by Committees, partly composed of non-official members." He further desired that "such items should be generally made local as the people are most likely to be able to understand the use of and administer well." He realised that the system might affect efficiency of administration initially, though it would increase later, but his aim was to introduce the measure "as an instrument of political and popular education." Another motive prominently in his mind was to relieve the administrators of over-work and to introduce economy.

As remarked by the Simon Commission practical changes of far reaching pronouncement were inaugurated by it. A network of local self-governing institutions was spread, laying great

stress on rural areas. One important feature of the new system was that the official element in such local bodies was reduced to not more than a third of the whole, and control was to be exercised from without and not from within. A measure of financial decentralisation was also effected and the mode of election was adopted in constituting these bodies. Also it was provided that there should be, as far as possible, non-official chairmen, both in municipal and rural bodies. The object was defined to be to make beginning in the "independent political life". Ripon desired that the jurisdiction of local boards should be so limited as to evoke among the members "local interest and local knowledge". And in every one of them there must be a preponderance of non-official members, officials not being more than one third of the whole. These members should be chosen by election, the mode of which was left to the provincial governments to determine in the light of local circumstances. Ripon greatly emphasised the principle of control from outside, and in that context desired that "the Government should revise and check the acts of local bodies but not dictate them". This control was to be exercised "in order to give validity to certain acts, such as the raising of loans, the imposition of taxes in other than duly authorised forms, the alienation of Municipal properties, interference with any matters involving religious question or affecting public peace". Moreover in cases of "gross and continued neglect of any important duty", the Government should have power to supersede the Board temporarily. The Resolution also stressed the importance of entrusting to the Boards the management of expenditure as well as revenues, and mentioned many taxes which might be given over to the local bodies. On these lines sufficient advance was made in various provinces and a small percentage of local men gained some experience in local administration.

The Decentralisation Commission of 1908 recommended further extension of this system, and its recommendations were taken into account when the Resolution of 1915 was issued which carried the experiment in local self-government "as a process of administrative devolution and political education", a step further. The Government of India noted "signs of vitality and growth" in it. They pinpointed the obstacles in its further

growth, and these were enumerated as "smallness and inelasticity of local revenues, the difficulty of devising further forms of taxation, the indifference prevailing in many places towards all forms of public life, and the continued unwillingness of many Indian gentlemen to submit to the troubles, expense and inconvenience of election". There was also the growing demand for greater efficiency, involving more direct expert control in matters affecting public health and education. Yet the Government of India favoured further extension and towards that object recommended substantial elective majority in the municipal bodies, election of non-officials as Chairmen, and in bigger municipalities, appointment of Municipal Commissioners, not removeable by the board as such. Suggestions were also made for enlarging the financial competence of municipal boards. There was insistence on retaining special powers of outside control by the government. In the matter of district, sub-divisional or rural boards also, the principle of elective majority was emphasised, but an official Chairman was to be generally retained for District Boards. In conclusion the Government of India hoped for "steady and sound progress" as it would "mark a definite advance in devolution and political education". Soon after the announcement of 20 August 1917, and publication of the Report on Constitutional Reforms, the Government of India published a comprehensive resolution, dated 16 May 1918, on the subject of local self-government. They stated that "the domain of urban and rural self-government was the great training ground from which political progress and a sense of responsibility have taken their form and...that the time had come to quicken the advance, to accelerate the rate of progress and thus to stimulate the sense of responsibility in the average citizen and to enlarge his experience". These were the necessary qualifications for launching on a programme of responsible government. Hence the Government of India desired that a "substantial advance should now be made on the lines laid down". And they reiterated the view "that the object of local self-government is to train the people in the management of their own local affairs and that the political education of this sort must, in the main, take precedence of considerations of departmental efficiency". Hence the Government of India

stressed the importance of making local bodies "as representative as possible of the people whose affairs they are called upon to administer, that their authority in the matters entrusted to them should be real and not nominal, and that they should not be subjected to unnecessary control." Therefore gradually government control should be removed and the spheres of action of the two should be clearly "differentiated". "Greater use of election in the selection of members and chairmen of boards" would lead to relaxation of "internal control" by the government and the external control would be minimised by the "removal of unnecessary restrictions in connection with taxation, budgets, the sanction of works and the local establishments". At the same time the Resolution desired that the franchise for election should be sufficiently low so that it may be possible to have real representatives of the rate-payers. The Resolution contained detailed elucidation of these principles and sought early action by provincial governments in implementing them, so that "substantial advance may be made in the direction of a more developed and more liberal form of local self-government". For it was in this sphere "that the changes which are now being effected in India will touch the great mass of the population". As the local boards dealt with matters which intimately affected the "essential welfare of the country", the Government believed that "in the development of their interests and the extension of their responsibilities the self-government of the country will secure a very real and important advance and it is on the increased experience to be gained in the administration of local civic affairs that the country must to a large degree rely for the expansion of its self-dependence in the sphere of Central Government". Thus was provided a framework for the introduction of responsible government.

The beginnings of responsible government were proposed to be made in the provinces for it was there that over half a century, decentralisation had been extended in the matter of finance, legislation and administration. Soon after the Revolt of 1857 urgency was felt for economy in expenditure and increase in revenue. Also there was a pressing need for development of means of communication for which the provincial governments had been clamouring for some time. Administra-

tive reorganisation, extension of education and welfare measures for the people were some other matters which called for early action. A financial expert, Wilson, was appointed to the Executive Council of the Governor-General to rehabilitate economy and bring order out of financial chaos. Demands were growing in every direction but the Government of India was "reluctant to increase taxation, as in the absence of any voluntary imposition by the people themselves, it must be resented as an act of despotism giving rise to discontent". The need for general improvement and modernising administration called for change in the system of centralised control. At the same time it was felt necessary to bring the measures, specially legislative and financial, of the government under public scrutiny; and the only field where such an experiment was practicable was provincial government and municipal administration. Decentralisation was thus the need of the hour and for nearly ten years various schemes were discussed to achieve that end, particularly in financial control. The pressure was growing to bring about harmonious relations between the Central and Presidency Governments. Ultimately in 1870, Lord Mayo published his Resolution on 14 December, which provided the base for further improvement. The foundation of his scheme was the principle that provincial governments should be made responsible for a part of the public expenditure. It was primarily a measure of economy as also for "avoidance of much administrative difficulty" and for associating "more and more of the Natives of this country with ourselves in the conduct of public affairs". His proposal was to transfer the departments of jails, registration, police, education, medical services, printing, roads, miscellaneous public improvements and civil buildings to the control of the provincial governments. To meet expenditure on these services the assignment on them in the budget provision minus a million pounds was fixed, and the balance was to be found either by retrenchment, redistribution of expenditure or local taxation by the provincial governments. They were free to distribute the sum among several departments at their discretion and any savings made were to remain at their disposal. These were known as Provincial Services for which separate budget

estimates and accounts were to be maintained. Their freedom to manage these services was subject to certain general restrictions consonant with the responsibility of the Government of India to the Secretary of State and uniformity in the country in respect of services and their emoluments. By this step Mayo hoped that greater care and economy would be produced in administration, an element of certainty would be introduced in the fiscal system and that it would lead to greater harmony in the relations between the Supreme and provincial governments. Moreover it would "afford opportunities for the development of Self-Government.....and for the association of Natives and Europeans to a greater extent than before, in the administration of affairs".

The next step was taken ten years later in 1881 when apart from expenditure certain heads of revenue were also transferred to the provincial governments and the settlement was fixed for a term of five years. In the Resolution then issued the new scheme was thus defined ; "That principle is this, instead of giving Local Governments a fixed sum of money to make good any excess of provincialised expenditure over provincial receipts, a certain proportion of the Imperial revenue of each province should be devoted to that object. Certain heads, as few in number as possible, are wholly or with minute local exceptions only, reserved as Imperial, others are divided, in proportions for the most part equal between Imperial and Provincial, the rest are wholly or with minute exceptions only, made Provincial. The balance of transfers being against the Local Governments, is rectified for each province by a fixed percentage on its Land Revenue". The advantage claimed was that it would give the provincial governments "a direct interest, not only in the provincialised revenue, but also in the most important items of Imperial Revenue raised within their own Province". By the new system of quinquennial provincial contracts, reviseable every five years, the Government of India hoped that the provincial governments "will be able effectually to promote economy as well as to develop the revenues". The Resolutions of 30 September 1881 and 17 January 1882 explained the main features of the new contract. By these the entire field of the revenues and expenditure of India was classi-

fied in three divisions, wholly imperial, wholly provincial and joint or divided. Also consolidated allotments to secure equilibrium in the provincial budgets were discontinued, giving them greater elasticity. It was further provided that the contract at the end of five years would be subject "to any revision which the wants of the Imperial revenues or the needs of other provinces might render expedient". The provincial governments were made wholly liable for famine expenditure and could not expect any aid from the Government of India, unless their available resources were completely exhausted. Similarly, the latter would make no demands on the former in case of war unless the disaster was so "abnormal as to exhaust the Imperial reserves and resources, and to necessitate the suspension of the entire machinery of public improvements throughout the Empire". The first revision was made in 1887 when owing to the needs of the Supreme Government some changes were effected in the 'Divided Head', thereby increasing its share of revenues. In subsequent revisions also this tendency was visible. The period from the time of Lansdowne to Curzon was marked by recurring famines, frontier wars and rising popular demand for reforms in administration, particularly the nation-building services. The Government of India, therefore, was compelled to augment its revenues and the revision of five yearly settlements was generally utilised to enhance its share of the divided heads. In the revisions of 'contract' effected in 1892 and 1897, no substantial modifications were made in the basis of the financial settlement and powers of the provincial governments; but some changes were made in its details. The authority of these governments was to some extent enlarged in the matter of granting loans to local bodies and advances to cultivators, but they were enjoined to adhere closely to budget rules and restrictions on withdrawals from provincial balances. The provincial governments, were however, unhappy at the effemeral character of the 'contract' and desired the settlement to be on a permanent basis so as to enable them to plan developments in their regions.

The Government of India was also prepared to bring about some fixity in provincial financial settlements. The provincial governments and public opinion were highly critical of the



existing contracts. Hence Curzon with the concurrence of the Secretary of State decided to make the settlement quasi-permanent, and that was facilitated by a series of surplus revenue years. The Supreme Government had taken recourse to this step owing to some grave defects in the quinquennial revision of contract. These were identified firstly as interference with the continuity of provincial finance involving protracted discussion with provincial governments, secondly that it encouraged extravagance rather than economy as there was the tendency to indulge in extravagant expenditure in the last two years of the contract period, and thirdly that the apportionment of revenue to several provinces had not been made on definite or logical principle. It was just "a system of five year budgets". Hence it was decided to remove these defects so as "to introduce an element of relative permanence into the settlement", and give the "Provincial Governments a permanent instead of a merely temporary interest in the revenue and expenditure under their control." The mode adopted was to calculate the proportion of provincial expenditure to the total expenditure and adjust the revenues between the Supreme and provincial governments on that basis. The division of heads of revenue and expenditure into three categories of imperial, provincial and divided, was continued. However ample resources were made available to the provincial governments to enable them to meet their needs adequately. The settlement was not fixed for any limited period to be subject to revision on its termination. But the Government of India reserved the power "to revise the settlement of any or all provinces at any time whenever necessity may demand it", but this power was to be exercised only "when the variations from the initial relative standard of revenue and expenditure in any province, over a substantial term of years have been so great as to result in unfairness either to the province itself, to other provinces, or to the Government of India or in the event of the Government of India being confronted with the alternative of either imposing additional taxation or of seeking assistance from the provinces". As such the settlements made between 1904 and 1907 were comparatively permanent. Finally in 1912, with slight modifications, these settlements were fixed in perpetuity and that continued till 1919, when by

the new Act radical change was made in the relationship between the provincial and Supreme governments. No substantial change was made in the "principles underlying the existing settlements", 'divided heads' were maintained, so also the system of 'doles' and fixed assignments was not relinquished. All that was done was to emphasise its permanence and allow some liberty to the provincial governments in the matter of budget etc. for which rules were amended.

This permanency of financial settlement was effected with the object of enabling the provincial governments to "develop their administration from their own assigned resources" and have "more abiding interest in the husbanding and directing of their own resources" so that "a sharper definition of the limits of provincial independence in financial matters would make it possible to allow much greater freedom of action within those limits". Hence relaxation of Government of India's control would be practicable in a greater measure. The provincial governments were not allowed to impose additional taxation which, however, might be practicable in future when "a clear separation between Imperial and Provincial finance with a more effective control on the latter by Legislative Councils" was made. The arrangement of 1912 did not involve financial autonomy of the provinces, but was intended to give them as much latitude as was compatible with the over-all supremacy of the Government of India and its responsibility to the Secretary of State. Apart from this restricted decentralisation in finance, since 1860, both by statute as well as practice, the provincial governments had been entrusted with power of legislation and carrying on day to day administration subject to control and direction of the Supreme Government. But neither public opinion nor the provincial governments were happy with the existing situation and desired greater autonomy in provincial administration, which was impracticable without a radical change in the system of centralised control. Decentralisation had reached its limit, but in essence it was illusory. The provincial governments could not undertake fresh taxation or raise loans. Under financial codes the Finance Department of the Government of India possessed "an infinite power of putting its finger in provincial affairs", the "doles" restricted their

liberty ; and owing to the inadequacy of their revenue they were unable to respond to the demands of their Legislative Councils for increased expenditure on education and other public utility services. The Councils were also unable to mould the financial policy of the provinces. The basis of the government was that of a unitary centralised system in which certain functions and powers had been delegated to the provincial governments for convenience of administration. There was as yet no federal finance. In matters of general administration the Government of India enunciated general policy and exercised minimum control over such services as education, local self-government, local public works, agriculture or sanitation. But in other fields such as police, jails, excise, irrigation works and law and order it maintained closer supervision, and the political situation as well as growing consciousness in the country made any relaxation impossible. So also in matters of legislation, the control which the Government of India exercised by means of executive directions remained unabated. Projects of local legislation were reviewed and examined in the Legislative Department of the Government of India and when a Bill had been allowed to be introduced on important amendments guidance and orders of the Supreme Government were necessary. Even in respect of non-official resolutions the attitude of the provincial governments was determined by the Central Government. As long as the statutory power of the Secretary of State to superintend, direct and control the Government of India remained there was no possibility of freeing the subordinate governments from superior control. The local governments at best exercised delegated powers subject to an all-pervasive supervision and superintendence of the Supreme Government.

Reviewing the existing financial relations between the central and provincial governments, the authors of the Report on Constitutional Reforms concluded that they "must be changed if the popular principle in Government is to have fair play in the provinces". An arrangement which had worked fairly satisfactorily between two official governments would be impossible when popular government was introduced in the provinces. And as the basic principle of the new reform scheme was to initiate steps in the provinces "towards the progressive realisa-

tion of responsible government", separation of resources between the central and provincial governments was essential, because "if provincial autonomy is to mean anything real clearly the provinces must not be dependent on the Indian Government for the means of provincial development". Hence proposal was made for the abolition of 'divided heads', make the provinces wholly responsible for expenditure on famine relief and protective irrigation works, and make land revenue together with irrigation completely provincial receipts. In addition excise and judicial stamps, out of the divided heads, were to be left to the provinces while income-tax and general stamps were to form part of imperial receipts. Another major suggestion was for a complete separation of the central and provincial budgets, the Indian budget taking cognizance only of direct transactions of the Government of India. Moreover the provincial governments would be free in the matter of taxation from central control and the mechanism to be adopted was to "schedule certain subjects of taxation as reserved for the provinces, and to retain the residuary powers to the hands of the Government of India, with whom rests the ultimate responsibility for the security of the country". In respect of the demand for allowing provinces to have the power of borrowing, the recommendation in the Report was that they "must continue to do their borrowing through the Government of India". It was hoped that by these measures the provincial governments would secure "liberty of financial action which is indispensable". As regards legislative and administrative business also, recommendation was made that "the provinces must also be secured against any unnecessary interference". Hence, but for certain reservations, "the sole legislative power shall rest with provincial legislatures". These reservations related to the "general over-riding power" of the Government of India in discharge of its functions. To achieve that purpose it could "intervene in any province for the protection and enforcement of the interests for which it is responsible ; to legislate on any provincial matter in the interest of uniformity of legislation in the country, and pass general laws which might be adopted by the provinces in their integrity or with necessary modifications". Referring to administrative control exercised by the Government of India, the authors of

the Report believed that "in so far as the provincial governments of the future will still remain partly bureaucratic in character, there can be no logical reasons for relaxing the control of superior official authority over them", but advised that in minor matters interference should be nominal. They, however, recognised the necessity of devising method of keeping "within very closely defined bounds", the superior interference in "matters normally falling within the range of popular bodies in the provinces". On these principles of devolution, was the Government of India Act of 1919 framed, though in many major aspects the recommendations of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report were modified by the Joint Select Committee of Parliament appointed to report on the Bill.

The Preamble to the Act clearly enunciated the goal of constitutional advance and declared that the policy of Parliament was "to provide for the increasing association of Indians in every branch of Indian administration, and for the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in British India as an integral part of the empire". As mentioned earlier its consummation was to be in stages. The first step was to be taken in the provincial sphere, hence the preamble laid down that "concurrently with the gradual development of self-governing institutions in the Provinces of India, it is expedient to give to those Provinces in provincial matters the largest measure of independence of the Government of India, which is compatible with the due discharge by the latter of its own responsibilities." In pursuance of this dictum, the provisions relating to provincial governments assume importance, for it was here that the experiment in dyarchy was conducted. Eight provinces of India, besides Burma, were made into Governor's provinces each to be administered by a Governor in Council with a Legislative Council endowed with powers to legislate and vote supplies. In respect of these provinces, the Act provided for rules to be made for "distinguishing the functions of provincial governments and legislatures from the functions of the Central Government and legislature, by dividing them into 'Central subjects' and 'Provincial subjects', and for the devolution of authority in respect of provincial subjects to local governments and for the allocation

of revenues or other moneys to those governments". Also provision was made for distinguishing transferred from reserved subjects in the provincial list. These rules to "regulate the extent and conditions of such devolution, allocation, and transfer", as well as fixing provincial contribution to central finance, creation of a finance department and regulation of its functions, as well as define the "powers of superintendence, direction, and control" of the Governor-General in Council in respect of transferred subjects. The Act also laid down that the provinces "shall each be governed, in relation to reserved subjects by a Governor in Council, and in relation to transferred subjects by the Governor acting with ministers appointed under this Act". The members of the Executive Council who were to be responsible for reserved subjects were appointed by the Secretary of State in Council and their maximum number was fixed at four, of whom atleast one must have served for twelve years in the service of the Crown in India, which in effect made reservation of atleast one of these to the members of the Indian Civil Service. Half of these were to be Indians. The Secretary of State fixed four as the number in the three presidencies of Bombay, Madras and Bengal, three in Bihar and two elsewhere. The Governor was empowered to appoint ministers, who must be members of the Legislative Council and depend upon its support, and who were to hold office during the pleasure of the Governor. The salaries of the members of the Executive Council and the ministers were to be the same, "unless a smaller salary is provided by vote of the Legislative Council of the province" for the ministers. The Act also made provision for appointment of council secretaries from among the members of the legislature receiving "such salary as may be provided by vote of the Legislative Council". However except for Madras such secretaries were not appointed in any other province.

By Devolution Rules made under Section 45—A of the Act subjects were allocated between the central and provincial governments. The principle underlying this classification, as mentioned by the Simon Commission, was that "where extra-provincial interests predominate, the subject is treated as central, while on the other hand all subjects in which the interests of a particular province essentially predominate are provincial." Accordingly

defence, external relations, relations with Indian States, communications including railways and shipping, posts and telegraphs, customs, tariffs, income tax, salt tax, currency and coinage, public debt, commerce, banking and insurance, civil and criminal law, companies, inventions and designs, copyright, emigration and immigration; botanical, zoological and archaeological surveys, meteorology, census and statistics, ecclesiastical affairs, all-India services, Public Service Commission, and development of industries and control of production, supply and distribution of articles in public interest, were allocated to the Government of India. All these subjects had extra-provincial significance and had an all-India character about them. In contrast the provincial list included subjects in which the people were intimately interested and on which action could be adopted by the provincial government without impinging on the interests of other provinces. Of course no action was possible in complete isolation, but normally, the operation of policies in relation to provincial subjects was of a limited nature. The subjects assigned to the provincial governments were among others mainly local self-government, education, medical administration, public health, public works, land-revenue, irrigation, famine relief, agriculture, civil veterinary department, fisheries, cooperative societies, forests, excise, administration of justice, stamps, registration of deeds and documents, registration of vital figures, religious and charitable endowments, development of mineral resources, development of industries, factories, labour disputes and welfare of labour, weights and measures, excluded areas, vagrancy and criminal tribes, prisons police, control over services within the province, provincial borrowing and any other matter declared by the Governor-General in Council to be of a merely local or private nature within the province. Thus separation of powers and resources was made between the central and provincial governments, and the latter could be relatively free within their own sphere to operate without nagging interference by the former and be ultimately responsible to their legislatures.

The basic feature of the reform scheme was the introduction of a limited form of responsible government in the provinces which implied that certain subjects should be administered

subject to control by the legislative council. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report had clearly expressed the view that complete responsibility "cannot be given immediately" in the provinces owing to the illiteracy of the electorate who would elect the members of the legislature and the inexperience of ministers who would be appointed from among the members of such legislative councils. Hence its authors emphasised that distinction must be drawn between departments which might be handed over to the ministers and those to be left under the control of official bureaucracy. This was the genesis of division between reserved and transferred subjects in provincial administration. The reserved subjects, as referred to earlier, were to be administered by the Governor and his Executive Council, while the transferred ones were brought within the purview of the Governor acting with his ministers, who were to be members of the legislature and thus accountable to it. In the list of transferred subjects were placed items which affected popular interest most intimately and would admit of immense improvement to build up the strength and vitality of the nation. These subjects as listed in the Devolution Rules were the following :— local self-government: public health, sanitation, medical administration including hospitals, etc., education except certain universities and institutions, public works including roads, buildings and bridges but excluding irrigation works. agriculture and fisheries, cooperative societies, excise excluding opium, and development of industries including industrial research and technical education. Forests were also a transferred subject in Bombay and Burma. Main reserved subjects were irrigation and canals, land revenue administration, famine relief, administration of justice, police, control of newspapers, books, and printing presses, prisons, forests, provincial borrowing ; and factory inspection, settlement of labour disputes, industrial insurance and housing. It will be evident from the two lists above that major subjects which related to law and order and land revenue were withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the ministers and as such their administration was not subject to responsibility to the Legislature Council. Finance fell within the jurisdiction of the reserved half. Beginnings of responsible government were to be made within the restricted field of the



transferred subjects which were neither too many nor affected peace and order in the community.

The executive government of a province was to consist of two parts, the Governor acting with the Executive Council and the Governor acting with ministers chosen by him from among the members of the legislature. Originally, according to the Report, the ministers were to be appointed for the life-time of the legislative council and if elected again would be re-eligible for appointment as such. Thus "they would not hold office at the will of the legislature but at that of their constituents". In such an arrangement the basic principle of responsible government was violated. This recommendation was rejected by the Parliament and the Statute fixed their tenure at the pleasure of the Governor, and also provided that their salary would be the same as that of a member of executive council "unless a smaller salary is provided by a vote of the Legislative Council of the Province". This change was made in deference to the principle that ministers should be responsible to the legislature. Resort was had to this clause by the Swarajists when they rejected the grant in the budget for such salaries in Bengal or reduced it to rupees two only in the Central Provinces in their bid to obstruct the functioning of dyarchy. As the number of ministers did not correspond to the number of departments in the category of transferred subjects, each one was responsible for the administration of many departments. The Governor was normally bound by the majority opinion and decision of the Executive Council unless he chose to over-ride it in the interest of safety, tranquillity or interests of his province. Likewise in the administration of transferred subjects he was bound by the advice of his ministers but he could for sufficient reason over-ride them. And if the question was one of principle or importance, the minister had the only option of resigning office. In such an eventuality either the subjects were to be given over to another member or the Governor might assume temporary charge of the subject. But in case ministerial government could not be carried, owing to the inability of the ministers to retain the confidence of the legislature or for other reasons, "a more drastic mode" of carrying on the government was the utilisation of the reserve power given to the Governor-General in Council, with the previous sanction of the Secretary of

State in Council, to "revoke or suspend the transfer of all or any subjects in the province" and thereupon such subjects relapsed into the position of "reserved subjects administered by the Governor in Council". This power was taken recourse to more than once.

The authors of the Report on Constitutional Reforms did neither provide for joint deliberation between the two wings of the government nor that of collective responsibility of the ministers. But the "Joint Select Committee, however, laid considerable stress on the desirability of fostering a habit of joint deliberation in regard to a large category of business". But when opinions had been expressed and after due consultation the decision in respect of reserved subjects was to be recorded separately by the Executive Council and those relating to transferred subjects by the ministers. The Governor was to act "as an informal arbitrator between the two halves of the government". But in the legislative council the two wings would act independently though they should "not oppose each other by speech or vote", and only support the measure when they were in full agreement. During the passage of the Bill in Parliament, joint deliberation between the two halves was very much insisted upon. Montagu made the position clear in his speech on 5 June 1919. He said, "if reserved subjects are to become transferred subjects one day, it is absolutely essential that during the transitional period, although there is no direct responsibility for them, there should be opportunities of influence and consultation". There is not much evidence for joint deliberations in every province, except that in Madras joint deliberations were a normal feature, and the Governor there "treated his government as a unified government". The ministers did not have opportunity to influence the decision of the reserved half of the government elsewhere, and joint deliberation was not followed in the provinces. There was also the problem of joint ministerial responsibility which is a fundamental feature of parliamentary government. Initially the Bill provided that the Governor would be "guided by the advice of the minister in charge of the subject", which if adopted would have obviated the necessity of collective responsibility. On the recommendation of the Joint Select Committee, however, the clause was amended so as to read ministers in place of minister, thereby implying joint responsibility. The

Simon Commission considered the phraseology ambiguous and have pointed to the clause in the Instrument of Instructions to the Governor, which enjoins him to consider the minister's advice, which implies a single minister, in the light of his relations with the legislative council and wishes of the people as expressed by their representatives in the legislature. In actual practice, in the absence of any statutory provision, joint ministerial responsibility was not in evidence universally or invariably, though instances of their acting together were found in every province. Joint ministerial responsibility involves existence of a well developed party system, but it was lacking at the time, and when the Swarajist Party emerged as a well-knit party its obstructionist policy and refusal to form ministries could not help the evolution of the system of collective responsibility as a normal feature.

The functioning of dyarchy in the executive government of the province necessarily depended on the tact, discretion and spirit of accommodation in the Governor who was, as the Simon Commission rightly described, the working head of the executive, presiding over its full meetings, and providing by his influence, advice and sometimes even direction, the cohesion between the two sides of government, which would otherwise be wholly lacking. The Act laid down that "all orders and other proceedings of the government of a governor's province shall be expressed to be made by the government of the province, and shall be authenticated as the governor may by rule direct so, however, that provision shall be made by rule for distinguishing orders and other proceedings relating to transferred subjects from other orders and proceedings." Such orders were not liable to be called into question in any court of law. The Governor was authorised to make rules "for regulating the relations between his executive council and his ministers for the purposes of the transaction of business of the local government". He was also enjoined "to help with sympathy and courage the popular side of his government in their new responsibilities". The Instrument of Instructions had directed the Governor to be "guided by the advice of his ministers, unless he sees sufficient cause to dissent from their opinion in which case he may require action to be taken otherwise than in accordance with that

advice". However, the Joint Select Committee had desired that the Governor, after hearing the arguments of the ministers and warning them in case he considered them to be taking a wrong course, "should ordinarily allow the ministers to have their own way.....fixing the responsibility upon them, even if it may subsequently be necessary for him to veto any particular piece of legislation". The Governor was also authorised to allocate finances between the two halves of the government. Thus the successful working of dyarchy depended on the discretion and watchfulness of the Governor, who was pre-eminently responsible to the Governor-General in Council and ultimately the Secretary of State and Parliament for his actions, and not to the local legislature and the people of the province. It may be presumed that he was more partial to the reserved half as the security and unhindered administration of the province depended on the proper functioning of such departments. In the existing political situation with the non-cooperation movement assailing the very existence of irresponsible bureaucratic government, the Governor had to maintain the effectiveness of instruments of law and order. Therefore, it is conceivable that the transferred subjects would not get sympathetic consideration and lacked financial resources which made the task of ministers difficult. Nevertheless the Simon Commission have praised the "skill and patience" of the Governors, their "spirit of accommodation", and their part in ensuring harmony between the two halves of the government and bringing about agreement between them.

The main object of the reform scheme was to "introduce responsible government in India, which necessarily implied the existence of a legislature representative of the people and exercising control or exerting influence on the executive government. The legislative bodies, both at the centre and in the provinces for the first time now assumed an existence independent of the executive and had their own identity. The councils upto 1919 were merely appendages of the executive councils, their members being termed additional members and only advisory bodies functioning under the presidentship of the executive head, the Governor or the Governor-General. In the eye of the statute, these members were nominated even though some of them had been elected by an indirect process.

"No general franchise and no territorial constituencies existed," as such there could not exist any "real connection between the primary voter and the member who sat in the councils" except in some special or communal constituencies. Hence the Act of 1919 marked, as Simon Commission expressed it, "an entirely new departure." It provided for "a legislative council in every governor's province, which shall consist of the members of the executive council and of members nominated or elected." The Governor was not to be its member or preside over it but had been empowered to address the legislature, fix time and place of its meeting and prorogue the council. The Governor could dissolve the council before the expiry of its term of three years, or extend its life by one year if special circumstances so warranted, and appoint a date not later than six months for the formation of the council and its next session. The Act further laid down that "in each council, not more than twenty per cent shall be official members and at least seventy per cent shall be elected members." The Governor was also authorised to nominate one member in Assam and two each in other provinces "having special knowledge and experience of the subject matter of the Bill." The numerical strength of the councils, qualifications of members, as well as of electors, the constitution of the constituencies and the method of election and other related matters were to be determined by rules. The Southborough Committee was appointed to recommend the principles which later were embodied in the rules made under the Act. The strength of the provincial legislatures varied from province to province. The statutory minimum for Bengal was 125, for Madras and United Provinces each 118, Bombay 111, Bihar and Orissa 98, Panjab 83, Central Provinces 70 and Assam 53 members. But the total membership, including the elected and nominated non-official members and officials was respectively 140, 132, 123, 114, 103, 94, 73 and 53. The members of the executive council were part of the official membership, and no official could seek election.

The Montagu-Chelmsford Report had recommended the franchise to be "broad" enough, to be determined by the Franchise Committee, keeping in view the limitations relating to "degree of education or amount of income which may be

held to constitute a qualification." Adult franchise was out of the question and all that was done to broaden the franchise was to confer it "on about one-tenth of the adult male population." Residence within the constituency, payment of a small amount of land revenue, rent or local rates in rural areas and of municipal taxes in urban areas, payment of income tax, were the main qualifications for exercising the right to vote. All retired, pensioned or discharged officers or men of the regular armed forces were also enfranchised. Women were not initially given the right to vote, but the provincial councils were empowered "by resolution to remove the sex-barrier," and it was done in every province, but their number was exceedingly small. Persons, not British subjects, of unsound mind, under the age of twenty one years, were disqualified to vote. Minimum age limit for candidates for election was 25 years, and those convicted by a criminal court of an offence involving a sentence of transportation or imprisonment for more than six months, in the absence of pardon, were not eligible for election for five years from the date of the expiration of sentence. Similarly persons guilty of corrupt practices at the elections were debarred for five years. Franchise being based on property qualifications, necessarily limited its extent to a small minority of the adult population and militated against the concept of democracy, which, however, was not intended by the framers of the Act to be initiated at that stage.

As against the earlier constitution, a system of direct election was adopted and territorial constituencies were created, a district, a single city or group of towns were to form the electoral unit. The constituencies were divided between general and special categories. The most important problem before the Franchise Committee was to devise methods for the adequate representation of communal and other minority interests. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report had not favoured communal electorates as they constituted "a very serious hindrance to the development of the self-governing principle." "But, nonetheless," as Simon Commission remarked, "the Joint Authors felt constrained, as far as the Mohammedans were concerned, to admit the system into the constitution they were framing, and to concede a similar arrangement to the Sikhs of the Punjab."

Minto's assurance to the Mohammedans in 1906 and the Congress-League Scheme of 1916 had led them to regard separate communal electorates as "vital to their interests." Thus the system was perpetuated "until conditions alter," which unfortunately never did under British rule. The general constituencies were therefore divided into two lists, Mohammedan and non-Mohammedan, and territorial units were carved out for each of them. The Mohammedans also got weightage according to the Congress-League formula in the provinces where they were in a minority. Though the Montagu-Chelmsford Report objected to communal representation in the provinces where they were in a majority, yet in Bengal and Punjab, though Muslim majority provinces, this method was applied because owing to property qualification they could obtain only a minority of votes. The Sikhs in Punjab also got 17.9 per cent of communal seats with a population ratio of 11.1 per cent. But separate electorate was not accorded to these religious communities only. They were also provided for Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans in Madras, Bengal, Bombay, United Provinces and Bihar and Orissa. Elsewhere they were represented by one member nominated by the Governor. Also "within the general body of non-Mohammedans, special arrangement was made to secure that a minimum of seats should be reserved for sections of the Hindu population which, it was claimed, might otherwise be under-represented. In Madras 20 seats out of 65 were reserved for non-Brahmins, and in Bombay 7 out of 46 for Marathas and allied castes, thereby creating plural-member constituencies. No reservation of seats was made for the depressed classes, but provision was made for their further representation by nomination. In Madras the number of such seats was 10, in Central Provinces it was 4, while in Bombay and Bihar and Orissa the number was fixed at 2 each and one only in the United Provinces. Nomination was also resorted to for securing representation of organised labour by nominating three in Bombay, two in Bengal and one each in other provinces except United Provinces and Madras, where there was none such. Seats were also provided to Chambers of Commerce, Trade Associations, and Mining and Planting Associations, and through these the Europeans gained

32 out of the total of 51 seats. Except Assam, in other provinces landholders were given from six to three seats, to which representatives were elected by that class alone. The right to elect members was retained by the Universities, but by the new rules the franchise was given to graduates of seven years standing, affording some seats for the educated middle class in the provincial legislatures. In this manner special interests found place in the legislative councils, but the most vicious system was that of communal electorates which sowed the poisonous seeds of separation leading ultimately to the partition of India in 1947.

Section 80 A of the Government of India Act of 1919 specified the powers of a local legislature which could "make laws for the peace and good government of the territories for the time being constituting that province". But there were limitations placed on the exercise of this power. It was enacted that "without the previous sanction of the Governor-General" it could not "make or take into consideration any law (a) imposing or authorising the imposition of any new tax unless the tax is a tax scheduled as exempted from the provision by rules made under this Act, or (b) affecting the public debt of India, or the customs duties or any other tax or duty for the time being in force and imposed by the authority of the Governor-General in Council for the purposes of the Government of India..., or (c) affecting the discipline or maintenance of any part of His Majesty's naval, military or air forces ; or (d) affecting the relations of the government with foreign princes or states; or (e) regulating any central subject; or (f) regulating any provincial subject declared by rules...to be either in whole or in part subject to legislation by the Indian legislature, in respect of any matter to which such declaration applies, or (g) affecting any power expressly reserved to the Governor-General in Council by any law for the time being in force" or (h) and (i) any law which had been declared by rules "to be a law which cannot be repealed or altered by the local legislature without previous sanction". It could not also make any law affecting any Act of Parliament. These limitations effectively restricted the exercise of powers by the local legislature, but in matters like defence, foreign affairs or central taxes it was inevitable that the local legislatures should



be restrained from making laws which infringe on the functions and powers of the Government of India. Sapru has objected to the provisions under sub-sections (h) and (i) which "narrow down the legislative scope of the councils". And as the previous sanction of the Governor-General, though his personal privilege, was in practice given or withheld upon the advice of the Legislative Department, "the Local Councils are thus, in the matter of previous sanction, subordinated to an "irresponsible Executive authority". Apart from these checks upon the local legislature, the Reservation of Bills Rules, which provided for reservation of bills for sanction by the Governor-General or His Majesty's Government, also militated against their independence.

As regards financial powers of the local legislature, the Act laid down that "the estimated annual expenditure and revenue of the province shall be laid in the form of a statement before the council every year, and the proposals of the local government for the appropriation of provincial revenues and other moneys in any year shall be submitted to the vote of the council in the form of demands for grants". The council had the power to "assent, or refuse its assent to a demand" or reduce the amount "either by a reduction of the whole grant or by the omission or reduction of any of the items of expenditure of which the grant is composed". Approximately, complete financial control was vested in the legislature. It was as it should be in a parliamentary form of government. But certain provisions in the Act restricted the authority of the legislature in matters financial as well, and gave power to the Governor to nullify the vote of the legislature by certifying "that the expenditure provided for by the demand is essential to the discharge of his responsibility for the subject" if it related to the category of reserved subjects. So also he was empowered in "cases of emergency to authorise such expenditure" as in his opinion was "necessary for the safety and tranquility of the province, or for carrying on of any department". Also without the recommendation of the Governor, no proposal for appropriation of revenues or other moneys could be moved in the council. Moreover the Act withheld certain items of expenditure from the purview of the council. These related to provincial contribution to the Government of

India, interest and sinking fund charges on loans, expenditure prescribed by law, salaries and pensions of persons appointed by the Secretary of State, which included members of the all-India services, and salaries of judges of high court and of the advocate-general. The Governor had complete power to determine whether any proposal relating to appropriation of revenues related to such subject or subjects. This power of certification and thereby restoring the grant refused by the legislative council was essentially limited to expenditure on a reserved subject. If, however, the grant related to a transferred subject, the Simon Commission pointed out, "the money cannot lawfully be paid, unless it is a case of emergency". So also in respect of any Bill, the Governor could certify that it was essential for the discharge of his responsibility and thereby overcome the unwillingness of the legislature to adopt it. But this power was restricted to reserved subjects only for in case of a bill introduced by a minister its rejection would lead to usual consequences namely resignation of minister, etc. The Governor also possessed the right to return the Bill for re-consideration, withhold his assent or reserve the Bill for consideration by the Governor-General. If within six months the latter's assent was not given, the Bill would lapse. The Governor-General could also reserve a Bill for consideration by His Majesty's Government and the Bill could have no validity until such assent was given. A Bill concerning religion or land revenue had to be reserved for consideration by the Governor-General and could not become law unless such assent had been received. The experiment in dyarchy was conducted with legislative councils possessing only limited powers, which implied that responsible government in a restricted sphere was subject to an irresponsible executive at the centre.

No fundamental change was made in the basic character or constitution of the Government of India by the Act of 1919. The Montague-Chelmsford Report clearly laid down that it "must remain wholly responsible to Parliament, and saving such responsibility, its authority in essential matters must remain indisputable." However immediately it recommended that 'the Indian Legislative Council should be enlarged and made more representative and its opportunities of influencing Government increased.

As no alteration was intended in the final control of Parliament through the Secretary of State whose power to superintend, direct and control the Government in India remained unabated, no relaxation was possible in the nature of extent of powers exercised by the Governor-General in Council. As before, the number and qualifications of the members of the Executive Council remained unaltered. The Governor-General in Council was vested, as earlier, with "the superintendence, direction and control of the civil and military government of India" and was bound "to pay due obedience to all such orders as he may receive from the Secretary of State." All matters of civil or military administration brought before the Executive Council were determined by majority of votes, the Governor-General having a casting vote in case of equality of votes, unless he chose to over ride his Council "in respect of any measure affecting the safety, tranquillity or interests of British India." The Government of India thus constituted was not constitutionally responsible to the Central Legislature, no vote of which could "bring about a change in its composition." The Simon Commission rightly stressed the view that "in all essential matters its own authority, save for its responsibility to Parliament, remains indisputable." Though vested with the power of superintendence, direction and control in all matters relating to civil and military Government of India, it was required to pay due obedience to all orders received from Secretary of State. Therefore, in constitutional theory, the Government of India was "a subordinate official government under His Majesty's Government." The Government of India administered primarily the central subjects listed as such in the Devolution Rules, and in addition it was entrusted with the power of superintendence, direction and control of all reserved provincial subjects as well as supervision over transferred subjects to safeguard the administration of reserved subjects, decide disputes between two provinces and safeguard the civil services in India. In addition the Government of India was responsible for the administration of territories outside the eight Governor's provinces, and the local executives there acted merely as its agencies.

The Governor-General was the keystone of this edifice and he was endowed with extensive powers, in cases of "emergency

and stress" to "completely over-ride" his Council and "disregard the most fully considered expression of opinion" of the properly-elected legislature. He prescribed the rules of business of the Executive Council and allocated the portfolios of its members. It was his prerogative to dissolve either chamber of the legislature, extend its life or certify legislation" essential for the safety tranquillity or interests of British India or any part thereof." He could restore the grants rejected by the Legislative Assembly and authorise expenditure essential for the safety and tranquillity of India. He was also empowered to give assent to or withhold it to any Bill, central or provincial, or reserve it for His Majesty's pleasure. In an emergency he had the power to issue ordinances having the effect of legislation operative for six months. In addition, his previous sanction was required for certain categories of legislation, and his decision about central expenditure falling within the non-votable categories was final. Nomination of official and non-official members of the Central legislature was also his function. But these legal powers do not give a proper assessment of the influence which he exerted on the course of Indian politics, for no new policy was embarked upon without previous consultation with him.

The Act provided for a bicameral legislature at the Centre, and laid down that a "Bill shall not be deemed to have been passed by the Indian legislature unless it has been passed by both chambers, either without amendment or with such amendments only as may be agreed upon by both chambers." In case of failure by either chamber to pass the Bill adopted by the other, the Act provided that "the Governor-General may in his discretion refer the matter for decision to a joint meeting of both chambers." There was also provision for the appointment of a joint committee with equal members of both the houses "to discuss any differences of opinion which has arisen between the two chambers." But recourse to the clause was rarely made. The two houses of the legislature were called respectively the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly. The former was to consist of not more than sixty members, of whom not more than twenty were to be official members. For the Legislative Assembly, the Act fixed the total number at one hundred and forty, of which forty were to be nominated members, twenty-six

of them being officials, and one hundred elected members. However, there was provision for increasing this number, and actually there were 145 members in the Assembly. The term prescribed for the Council of State was five years and three years for the Legislative Assembly. The Governor-General had, however, the power to dissolve either chamber before the expiry of its term or, on special circumstances extend it. He was not to be a member of either house, and the Act provided for the appointment of a separate President for either of them. While there was no provision for election of the President of the Council of State, in the case of the Legislative Assembly, the first President was to be appointed for four years by the Governor-General, but afterwards he was to be elected by the Assembly. Deputy President was to be elected by the house itself from among its members, who was to preside at meetings in the absence of the President. By the rules made under the Act, and in pursuance of the recommendations of the Southborough Committee, qualifications for membership and right to vote as well as the extent of the constituencies were prescribed. The minimum age for eligibility to seek election was fixed at 25 years for the Legislative Assembly and 35 years for the Council of State. Franchise was kept high for the Council of State, which limited it to persons possessing high property qualifications, so "as to secure the representation of wealthy landowners and merchants." Besides, former members of the Central Provincial legislatures, chairmen of municipal councils and members of the University senates were also given the right to vote. For the Legislative Assembly the franchise was the same as for the provincial legislatures. Communal electorates were also provided for. The Simon Commission have pointed out that the constituencies were so extensive that close contact between the electors and their representatives was almost impossible.

The Indian legislature, thus constituted, was vested with the "power to make laws for all persons, courts, places, and things within British India" as well as the subjects of His Majesty in the Indian States or outside India. Section 67 of the Act, however, prescribed certain restrictions on the exercise of the apparently supreme power of legislation. It required previous sanction of the Governor-General for the introduction of any

measure affecting public debt or revenues of India; religion or religious rites or usages of any class of British subjects in India; the discipline or maintenance of any part of His Majesty's military, naval or air forces; relations of the Government with any foreign powers or states; any provincial subject or any part of a provincial subject which has been declared by rules to be subject to legislation by the Indian legislature; repealing or amending any Act of a local legislature; or any Act or Ordinance made by the Governor-General. Because of these limitations, the Simon Commission was led to conclude rightly that "there is really no formal distribution of legislative power in the Indian Constitution between the Centre and the Provinces, although, for practical purposes a real distribution of legislative power exists". However, notwithstanding such distribution, "the Central legislature is theoretically entitled to legislate for the whole field, at any rate, if the Governor-General's sanction is given in a case where the topic more naturally falls within the provincial sphere". Excepting for such limitations the central legislature was competent to discuss bills and resolutions pertaining to the Government of India, and the members were free to express their views without fear of any legal proceedings. The legislature was also endowed with financial powers and, unlike the practice under Morley-Minto scheme, could discuss the budget and vote grants to meet the expenditure of the Government of India. The annual estimates or the budget was presented to both the houses of the legislature, in the form of a statement. But no proposals of expenditure of any revenue or moneys for any purpose could be made except on the recommendation of the Governor-General. But there were certain heads of expenditure which could neither be discussed in either chamber or voted upon in the Legislative Assembly, "unless the Governor-General otherwise directs". These subjects, as in the case of the provinces, were interest and sinking fund charges on loans, expenditure prescribed by or under any law; salaries and pensions of the members of the services recruited by the Secretary of State and any sums sanctioned by the Secretary of State to be paid to any person in the service of the Crown in India; and expenditure classified as ecclesiastical, political and defence.

Thus the whole of army expenditure was "non-voted", though the Governor-General might open it for discussion. Similarly expenses of the political and ecclesiastical departments were also protected. Thus a very large portion of expenditure was free from the control of the legislature. The votable expenditure was submitted to the Legislative Assembly in the form of demands for grants, which alone had the power to grant or withhold supply. In the event of the refusal of the grant by the Assembly, the Governor-General in Council was "empowered to declare that he is satisfied that the demand which has been refused is essential to the discharge of responsibilities", and the Government of India could act as if the demand had been accepted by the Assembly. This power of 'restoration' was resorted to on numerous occasions. In addition to these limitations on the competence of the legislature, the Governor-General was also given the power of certification, as in the case of provincial governments. He could certify that the Bill or any clause of it, "affects the safety and tranquillity of British India", and thereby stop further proceedings on it. This preventive power, as Sapru terms it, was strictly limited to the safety and tranquillity of British India. He had also an affirmative power under Section 67 B, by which a Bill refused by the legislature, if certified as being essential for the safety, tranquillity or interests of British India, would become an Act. Moreover, if any Bill had been refused by one house, the Governor-General might lay it before the other house and on receiving its assent it would become an Act; but even if it refused to accept the Bill, it could become an Act on receiving the signature of the Governor-General. This power of certification was subject to the proviso that the Bill must be laid before the Parliament and receive the assent of His Majesty. In times of emergency, as declared by the Governor-General, this proviso was abrogated. The Simon Commission have pointed out that the power of certification was exercised only on four occasions in eight years.

These limitations imposed on the powers of the legislature and the power of certification entrusted to the Governor-General definitely affected the supremacy of legislature, and it was inevitable also in view of the principle that the Government

of India being responsible to the Secretary of State must remain unaccountable to the legislature. All that the legislature was intended to achieve was to exert influence on the policies and actions of the government, which it could do by expressing its opinion on the measures of the Government, discussion of the budget, resolution, adjournment motions and interpellations. It is, however, difficult to judge the efficacy of these instruments in swaying the course of administration or moulding the policies of the Government. This ineffectiveness of the legislature in controlling the administration was greatly deplored by the Indian public opinion which increasingly demanded self-government, implying the complete responsibility of the executive to the legislature. The Act of 1919 did not envisage the attainment of that stage and therefore failed to meet the aspirations of political India. The new reform scheme was merely a limited exercise in responsibility, which met with little success owing to its character and the political situation in India in which it was launched.

Before an assessment is made of the operation of the Act and the extent to which it succeeded, or otherwise, in meeting with the aspirations of political opinion in India, it may be relevant here to review the nature of Parliamentary control exercised through the Secretary of State for India and his Council. Since 1858 when the Crown assumed supreme authority over the government in India, the responsibility for the good government of India had vested in the Parliament. This power it exercised through the Secretary of State who, as a member of the British Cabinet, was accountable to it for all his actions and policies which he enforced in India. The Act of 1919 did not impair this ultimate supremacy of the Parliament, and as such there was no abatement in the authority of the Secretary of State to "superintend, direct and control all acts, operations and concerns which relate to the government or the revenues of India and the Governor-General, and through him the provincial Governments, are required to pay due obedience to the orders of the Secretary of State". However, as Simon Commission remarked, this power of superintendence was "restricted by the devolution of authority under the Act of 1919". Section 19-A defined the powers which might be exercised by the



Secretary of State in relation to the transferred subjects in the provinces and which were to be exercised for specific purposes. These were laid down as "to safeguard central subjects, to decide questions arising between two provinces which have failed to agree; to safeguard Imperial interests; to determine the position of the Government of India in respect of questions arising between India and other parts of the Empire; and to safeguard the exercise of powers and duties imposed upon the Secretary of State or the Secretary of State in Council by certain sections of the Act". Theoretically the Parliament was not directly concerned with the administration of transferred subjects but the reservations enumerated above did intimately affect the operation of transferred subjects. In respect of reserved subjects in the provincial field and the entire administration of the Central government, the Secretary of State retained absolute control as the agent of the Parliament. The Act authorised the Secretary of State by rule to "regulate and restrict the exercise of the powers of superintendence, direction and control" vested in him, but as Sapru argued, the operation of Section 131, which unambiguously laid down that "nothing in this Act shall derogate from any rights vested in His Majesty's or any powers of the Secretary of State in Council in relation to the Government of India", would render ineffective any relaxation under section 19-A. Hailey made it abundantly clear in his speech in the Legislative Assembly on 18 July 1923, that until a change was made in the constitution, "as a consequence of which certain subjects can be handed over to the control of the Indian Legislature, in other words, until they are administered by Ministers", "the Secretary of State should not divest himself of authority under Section 19 A". All that this exercise might effect would be to "lead to a certain amount of facility in the way of the Government of India for doing certain administrative things without the previous or subsequent assessment or approval of the Secretary of State" and would not affect the constitutional position of Parliament over government in India. Hence it may be inferred that the right of control vested in the Secretary of State was not affected by the Act of 1919.

The Royal Proclamation issued on 23 December 1919 announced the purpose of the new Act to be to entrust "elected

representatives of the people with a definite share in the government and points the way to full responsible government hereafter". The King Emperor recognised the aspiration of the people to control their domestic concerns, but the burden was "too heavy to be borne in full until time and experience have brought the necessary strength". The new Act gave an opportunity for such "experience to grow and for responsibility to increase with the capacity for its fulfilment", Imperial interests involving defence of India, however, remained the primary concern of the British rulers. But the new constitution had inherent defects which prevented real transfer of responsibility to the people even in the limited sphere assigned for this purpose by the Act. In the provinces, the dyarchical form of government involved responsibility to an elected legislature within a certain definite range. The Simon Commission recognised that if this intention was not carried out, "the justification for the constitutional bifurcation.....is difficult to find"; and commented, "in the light of experience, it may be doubted whether the object aimed at could be attained as long as both halves of Government have to present themselves before the same legislature". The provincial legislatures were "set the difficult task of discharging two distinct functions at the same time. In one sphere they were to exercise control over policy; in the other, while free to criticise and vote or withhold supply, they were to have no responsibility". In actual functioning this distinction was blurred so much that the Simon Commission observed that the legislatures developed the tendency "to regard the Government as a whole, to think of Ministers as on a footing not very different from that of the Executive Councillors, to forget the extent of opportunities of the legislatures on the transferred side and to magnify their functions in the reserved field". In the absence of a well organised party system, the ministers, not commanding a majority of their own, had to depend on the official bloc for carrying their measures successfully in the legislature; similarly the reserved half had to depend on the support of the ministers for a proper response to their measures in the legislatures. In this process, as the Simon Commission remarked, "the two halves of Government have been thrown into each other's arms through their relations with

the legislature, no less than by the impossibility of conducting the administration in compartments". This might have activated the impulse towards a "unification of Government", but it led to the obliteration of the essential "conception of the dyarchic system complete responsibility of Ministers in a certain defined field, and in that field only".

The working of dyarchy may also be examined in the context of relationship between the Governors and ministers, joint ministerial responsibility and the joint deliberations between the two wings. The Governor, of course, was not expected to "occupy the position of a purely constitutional governor"; but the Act required him to be guided by the advice of the ministers in regard to transferred subjects, unless there was sufficient cause to dissent from it. So also did the Instrument of Instructions enjoin that in determining his action on such advice he should be guided by the ministers' relations with the Legislative Council. A minister commanding the support of the Council would make it impossible for the Governor to discard his advice lightly ; but such support was generally rare. And the effect was that the ministers did not have sufficient freedom in their own departments and were subject to constant interference by the Governor. The powers given to the Governor by the Constitution made such a result inevitable. When the Reforms Inquiry Committee of 1924 recommended curtailment of his powers to dissent from his ministers by defining the occasions for their exercise, the Government of the United Provinces strongly reacted against it, and some other Governors also did not agree with its recommendations. The control exercised by the Governor on the transferred side, and the curbs imposed by the Finance Department, a subject in the reserved half, made proper functioning of the transferred subjects difficult, if not impossible. Then there was relative absence of joint responsibility among the ministers. In the United Provinces the two ministers resigned in 1923, exhibiting their sense of joint responsibility; so also there were occasions in the Central Provinces when they resigned jointly; but except in case of no-confidence, joint responsibility was scarcely observed. The comment of the United Provinces Committee to cooperate with the Statutory Commission brings into prominence the weakness of the constitution. It remarked,

"The fact that even the Transferred half of the Local Government has not been able to work collectively, is in itself a serious condemnation of the existing system of Government. Without acting jointly the Ministers cannot present a solid front to the parties in opposition and this strikes at the root of the development of responsible Government on party lines". One reason for this lacunae is that the "Ministers have been artificially supported by the official bloc in the Council". This dependence made the ministers helpless in resisting the extension of the sphere of the reserved departments. Except for Madras there is little evidence of joint deliberation between the reserved and transferred half; and many Governors did not even countenance joint deliberation with the ministers and thus prevented the evolution of cabinet system, an essential basis of responsible government.

Discussing the use of the power of certification by the Governor, the Simon Commission have commented that "nothing but absolute necessity for carrying on administration has evoked the rise of special over-riding powers and that the occasions for their use have been sporadic and limited, except in Bengal and the Central Provinces where they have at times to be used in a wholesale manner. Outside these two provinces, Government and the legislature have usually agreed, or at any rate have not finally differed. But it is less easy to say whether provincial Governments, in being guided normally by the wishes of legislatures in which they do not command any assured majority, have been seriously hampered in their conduct of affairs". Though not many instances of certification of legislative measures were there, cases in which cuts in expenditure made by the legislature were restored were numerous. And in the provinces where the entire budget was rejected by the Swarajist party, the Governor used his power of certification to restore the budget. All that might be said was that restorations were not frequent in respect of the transferred subjects, and in these the legislatures were also considerate because of the importance of the measures for national development. At the inauguration of the reforms, the non-cooperation movement was in full swing with the result that elections to the councils were boycotted and the nationalists refrained from them. The Moderates or Liberals, as they were then called, the landlords,

the Europeans, the non-progressive Muslims and those whose vested interests made them look up to the bureaucracy entered the provincial legislatures. The first councils, therefore, did not create any serious occasions of conflict and some useful legislation was effected. Education and local self-government were given adequate attention, but matters like land-revenue, police, jails, etc. were kept apart from the impact of popular opinion. In 1923 with the formation of the Swaraj party with their programme of entering the legislatures to wreck the Constitution from within, the provincial governments had to face real opposition. In Bengal and the Central Provinces, the Swarajists were in absolute majority, and by refusing to form the ministries, they compelled the government to take over the transferred subjects and thereby abrogate the provisions of the constitution relating to dyarchy. When the budgets were rejected, power of certification was freely used but the Governor could not restore the cut relating to the salary of the ministers which led to the dissolution of the ministries. In Bombay and the United Provinces also, as elsewhere, the government did not have easy time. In 1926, the Swarajists failed to return in strength and in 1928 they withdrew from the legislatures. Thereafter the ministries hardly commanded respect outside and the government was free to conduct administration; but the spirit of the constitution was absent. It may be correct to hold that dyarchy as a system of government had failed and there was universal demand for full provincial autonomy when the Simon Commission was appointed to review the working of the constitution of 1919.

In Central government no radical change was brought about by the Act of 1919, and none was intended either. Montagu-Chelmsford Report had clearly stated that the "Government of India must remain wholly responsible to Parliament, and..... its authority in essential matters must remain indisputable." However, the Legislative Council must be "enlarged and made more representative and its opportunities of influencing Government increased." The central or supreme government, therefore, remained as autocratic and irresponsible as before the reforms; but the presence of a representative legislature with an overwhelming preponderance of elected non-official members was bound to react on the policies and measures of government.

The impact of the legislature was both direct and indirect. Interpellations and resolutions, financial powers and standing committees were the instruments for exerting directly influence on the government. The Simon Commission admitted that right of interpellation was exercised to "draw attention to matters of real public importance, and Government action has repeatedly been influenced by such questions." But resolutions operated in a greater measure to bring "influence to bear on Government," and this method was employed both by the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State. Upto 1928, out of 91 divisions which took place on such resolutions, 51 went in favour of government and 40 against it. The Simon Commission have pointed out certain important matters which were set in motion by non-official resolutions on which the Government of India took action subsequently. Among others there were "the adoption of a fiscal policy of discriminating protection, the statutory recognition and regulation of Trade Unions, the repeal of certain laws arming the Executive with special powers in emergencies and the Press Act, the abolition of the excise duty on Cotton, and the constitution of the Indian Territorial Force." The Assembly also demanded punishment of officers responsible for brutal acts in Punjab and Amritsar in 1919 and payment of compensation to their victims. Moreover it was active in pressing the demand for "introducing Indianisation in the army, transferring management of some railways to the state, initiating removal of racial discrimination in criminal trials.....and procuring measures of social welfare." With the entry of the Swaraj Party in 1923, greater pressure was exerted on the government to take early steps for establishing full responsible government in India. Despite vehement official opposition the Assembly adopted the resolution on 18 February 1924, calling upon the government "to summon at an early date a representative Round Table Conference to recommend with due regard to the protection of the rights and interests of important minorities the scheme of a constitution for India", for being embodied in statute by Parliament. The government response was the appointment of the Muddiman Enquiry Committee to "investigate the difficulties arising from or inherent in the working of the Government of India Act of 1919 and to suggest re-

medies to remove them.” The report of this Committee was placed before the Assembly, the government recommending the adoption of recommendations contained in the majority report. But Motilal Nehru’s amendment recognising the right of India to responsible government and immediate summoning of a Round Table Conference was carried by a large majority. Also the government move to supplement the Criminal Law in Bengal by an Ordinance was nullified by the non-official resolution urging “that steps be taken forthwith to supersede by an Act of the Indian Legislature the Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance of 1924”; and the resolution was carried by a majority of votes compelling the government to strike down the Ordinance. Finally when the Simon Commission was appointed the Assembly expressed its complete lack of confidence in it. Thus by means of resolutions and interpellations the Assembly made earnest efforts to introduce measures for economic and political advancement of India and censure the government for its repressive policy.

An essential attribute of responsible government is the power of the legislature to control finance, sanction taxation and grant funds to the executive for purposes of administration. By the Act of 1919, however, this financial power of the Legislative Assembly was considerably curtailed by the inclusion of the major part of state budget under the category of non-votable items, which comprised of subjects like defence, superior services and political and ecclesiastical matters. However, the practice had developed to present the budget as a whole to the legislature for discussion. This occasion was utilised to review the entire policy of the government and move cuts in the interest of economy or to express popular resentment and dissatisfaction with certain measures of state policy. In the second Legislative Assembly, the Swaraj Party had been returned in sufficient numbers and by combining with the Nationalists and some Independents it could command a majority on particular issues. Dissatisfied with the response of the government to the demand for the Round Table Conference to revise the constitution, and to expose the “hollowness of the claim that the Reforms had ended autocracy”, when the budget for the year 1924-1925 was presented, the Nationalists either totally refused or cut down

demand after demand and thus refused to vote supplies. And finally they rejected the Finance Bill, compelling the Governor-General to restore the demands by the use of his powers of certification. Next year also the Swarajists wished to adopt the same strategy but the other groups were not prepared to go to that length. Consequently the Nationalists were able only to secure cuts in the demands and "castigate the Government on its mistakes of omission and commission". The Simon Commission has noted that generally token cuts were proposed "with the object of drawing attention to specific grievances", or prevented from touching the non-votable items the Assembly resorted to cuts in the votable category in the interest of economy. In consequence, the government was often led to "cut down its non-votable estimates," so as not to be compelled to have resort to certification by restoring cuts in the voted items. Generally the legislature was able to influence, though feebly, the policies of the government in non-essential matters by the use of its limited powers of financial control. The same purpose was served by the two Standing Committees on Finance and Public Accounts which comprised members drawn from the Legislative Assembly. The Finance Committee scrutinised the "government's proposals for new items of votable expenditure" and its advice was generally adopted by the executive when presenting demands for supply. The other committee was "empowered to deal with the auditing and appropriation of the accounts" and "to satisfy itself that the money voted by the Assembly has been spent within the scope of the demands granted by the Assembly".

The working of the new constitution clearly revealed its defects and made it evident that unless radical change was made in its character, the progress towards responsible government would be impracticable. In the provincial sphere dyarchy was unworkable and chinks were exposed in it. The division between reserved and transferred subjects was illogical and dyarchy was successful only where it was ignored. The powers of the Governor affected both the halves of government and mostly the ministers were able to hold their position only with the support of the official bloc. It will be apparent from the trend of working in the provinces that there was little change in the autocratic nature of government and the Governor, responsible only to the



Governor-General and Secretary of State, administered the province almost as a despot. In the central sphere, though the legislature occasionally had its impact on government policies and their operation, in all essential matters, and particularly at the time when political movement was in full swing, the Governor-General in Council acted in imperial interests unmindful of the wishes and sentiments of the people. This fact intensified the demand for early revision of the constitution to accelerate the process towards self-government. The appointment of the Simon Commission, before the expiry of ten years, and the convening of the Round Table Conference were steps in that direction. The non-cooperation and civil disobedience movements operated to rouse the sleeping masses to lend their weight to nationalist demand for self-government. The Government had to yield and ultimately the Government of India Act of 1935 accepted the principle of provincial autonomy and federation as the next stage of advance towards self-government.

## *The Beginnings of Constitutional Agitation*

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We have seen, in the previous Volume, how, step by step, the British empire had grown into India by subordinating the independent states, one by one, to its yoke. They had been either merged into British dominion or sufficiently humbled to be subservient to its will. By the middle of the nineteenth century, thus, the British empire had spread over the whole of India from the seas to the mountains in the north and north-west. In the process of its expansion, however, the victors had met with resistance, stout or feeble, from individual states or occasional loose combinations of them. Yet it will be correct to say that the rulers of such states seldom appreciated the gravity of the situation and indulged in purile, often frivolous contests of power amongst themselves, for petty territorial gains or gratifying their vanity. The weak and inert Mughal empire had neither the capacity nor the will to oppose the foreign foe. The Marathas, whose military might was the greatest in the eighteenth century and who had consistently nibbled into Mughal possessions and had thereby exhausted its resources, rejoiced in plunderous expeditions into the territories of Indian princes and sapping their strength to withstand British aggressions. They were happier in extracting tribute from Rajput states, or the rulers of southern and central India. Their unceasing war with the rulers of Mysore for the possession of some intervening land and money payments blinded them to the danger which, in their mutual hostility, threatened the independence of both the Marathas and Mysore states. The internal feuds and mutual

jealousies in the Maratha confederacy rarely enabled them to combine against a common enemy, and though they exhibited sense of unity against the Nizam in 1795, no such combination had ever been organised against the British who were always certain of gaining the loyalty of a Gaikwar or Bhonsla, when other Maratha chiefs were at war with them. There was utter lack of patriotism or consciousness of united India among the Maratha princes which, more than anything, prevented their opposing British advance, except when they were themselves exposed to such a menace. The petty Rajput states were revelling in mutual fights and became an easy prey to the aggression of the Marathas or numerous plundering hordes, which had emerged in the wake of the dislocation of central authority. Bengal and Awadh had very early submitted to British domination and the new Sikh kingdom in Punjab was eager for self-preservation by respecting the border of the Satluj which marked its frontiers in the east. And ultimately when the strong man Ranjit Singh had disappeared, this state also met the same fate and was annexed to British empire. Thus, for lack of united action, though there was occasional evidence of stout resistance from individual states, the British had succeeded before 1857 in establishing their empire over the whole of India and depriving the people and rulers of the country of their freedom.

The aristocracy of land or wealth, motivated by vested interests which were assailed by British administration, also failed to stem the tide of imperial advance. Frequent risings of landholders in upper India or the poligars in the south were ruthlessly suppressed. The revolt of 1857 which marked the culmination of violent reaction against foreign rule fared no better fate, revealing the utter ineffectiveness of the employment of military means to shake off alien subjection. Unorganised military revolt by people disunited and lacking in modern equipment or the art of war are doomed to failure against a disciplined army possessed of efficient firing power and led by generals skilled in warfare. The British government commanded the resources of India and England, both financial and military. Its officers were motivated by a sense of mission and patriotic fervour. They were fighting for a cause which they seldom betrayed. This combination of spiritual and material advantage enabled them

to beat all opposition and establish their empire in India. It was clearly evident by 1858 that the time-worn method of violent military resistance had no prospect of extricating Indian people from foreign rule. In the decades following the great revolt, though advocates of violence were still there, the trend of opposition to British government and its system of administration tended towards non-violent resistance which at different stages assumed the form of constitutional agitation, boycott, home rule, non association or civil disobedience.

When the country was simmering with discontent born of the administrative measures of the government, particularly its revenue demands and inequitous fiscal measures, stirrings of political consciousness were visible in the metropolitan towns, particularly Calcutta where the supreme government was located. Conventionally such awakening has been attributed to the contacts with western thought resulting from growing knowledge of English language and literature. Utilitarian motives had prompted many to resort to seminaries opened by Christian missionaries and other imparting education in English language and European thought. The opening of the Hindu College climaxed these early endeavours at westernisation of Indian intellectual outlook and social behaviour. Raja Ram Mohan Roy lent his blessings to this movement, so that by the middle of the nineteenth century a large band of ardent advocates of political reform and trenchant critics of governmental policies had grown up in these cities. This movement was, however, essentially urban and upper middle class in its character. The peasantry still believed in the leadership of their landowning chiefs and remained for long unaffected by the subtleties of polemical politics. There was no labour class yet for modern industries had not developed then. Hence the politics of the urban, western educated middle class had tended to be motivated by sectional interests and had little contact with the realities of life. Yet the patriotism of new leaders was undoubted and their courage and boldness admirable. They established newspapers, both in English and Indian languages, and founded clubs and associations to discuss political problems, review administrative measures and organise public opinion in their favour or in opposing them. Many politico-academic

associations had cropped up in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Social abuses had attracted their attention leading to a mounting wave of reform. It is these rumblings of a new awakening which characterised these early decades of the last century and which heralded the national political movement which is the essential feature of its closing years and the first few years of the present century.

Political awakening was preceded by a profound liberalising movement in religion and social practices. In this process of change the influence of Raja Ram Mohan Roy is predominant, but one cannot omit the impress of Derozio's radical thinking and his impact on his students who founded the Academic Association in 1828. In this debating club subjects which were discussed included 'free will, foreordination, fate, faith, the sacredness of truth, the high duty of cultivating virtue, and the meanness of vice, the nobility of patriotism, the attributes of God, and the arguments for and against the existence of the deity, the hollowness of idolatry, and the shams of the priesthood'. As B.B. Majumdar has pointed out the members of this body read European revolutionary literature, admired French Revolution, hated British Tories and drew attention to "the fallen state of their motherland and dreamt of a free and self-governing India in the future". Derozio paid a heavy price for his liberal views when he was dismissed from the Hindu College under government pressure. He died young, a great patriot and a powerful teacher. Raja Rammohan Roy was, however, the father of the liberal movement and his influence was felt in every domain of community thinking. His role in the abolition of sati is well-known. He was equally ardent in the promotion of modern education and the cause of emancipation of women. He denounced idolatry and priestcraft and used his knowledge of the ancient religious thought for the eradication of superstition and blind faith in the practice of Hinduism. His contribution to journalism was great and he stood forth as the champion of freedom of the press. His admiration for western thought and British parliamentary system did not blind him to the defects of British administration in India. He began therefore the mode of representing to the English Parliament and people against the abuses and inequities which characterised their government in.

India. He went to England at the time of the revision of the Charter of the East India Company in 1833 and tried to mould the nature of opposition's criticism to Company's rule. Raja also advocated representative government in India and demanded association of Indians in the law-making machinery of Government. His ideas left a deep impression on later political thinking and the character of the associations which were formed to advocate political reform.

Initially public opinion had expressed itself in the matter of social reform, but in the fourth decade of the nineteenth century a new turn was given to it by two measures adopted by the government. The first was the "process of resuming lands which had been rent-free for a long time but whose holders could not produce valid title deeds". These proceedings affected the material interests of a large number of persons of the community of traditional learning and created apprehension that the government was aiming at the cancellation of the permanent settlement. This fear gripped the large, rich and powerful body of landlords in Bengal who were the leaders of public opinion. The second measure was the intended legislation to bring domiciled British and Anglo-Indians on par with the Indians before the law courts by depriving them of the privilege of appeal to the Supreme Court against the decisions of the Company's provincial tribunals. This legislation was termed as the 'Black Act' by the European community which started vehement agitation against it. Curiously enough some leading, influential Indians of Calcutta lent support to this movement because they were opposed to the process of levelling down and could not brook to witness, without a pang the trampling down of 'the rights and liberties of British subjects'. A public meeting was held in Calcutta which was attended by about a dozen of leading Indians and many speakers denounced the 'despotic government of the Company' and demanded the establishment of a legislative council for India containing non-official members and holding open sessions. The 'Black Act' agitation, according to Mehrotra, encouraged Dwarka Nath Tagore and his associates "to attempt something for more systematic and extensive than the merely sporadic and local protests they had hitherto attempted". In this they had the support of the Anglo-Indian community, whose leader

Theodore Dickens suggested the organisation of the Landholders' Society, which was formed on 10 November 1837, "to defend and promote the landed interests of the country", which naturally comprehended the interest of the landlords and not the tenants and cultivators. At its first meeting when it was formally inaugurated in March 1838, its president indicated its purpose at that of keeping "a watch over the measures of Government and its functionaries and making representations to it". The Society was to "provide the people with a ready means of bringing their grievances to the notice of the proper authorities and restrain them from adopting an erroneous course", but there was no intention of opposing the government. It was also decided to have contacts with the mofussil and other provinces as well as to have contacts in England.

The Landholders' Society was pre-eminently an organisation of the zamindars and brought on one platform the British and Indian representatives of this community. From the very beginning it believed in close association with "the well-wishers of India in the United Kingdom for getting their grievances redressed" and when about the same time the British India Society was established in London by William Adam and George Thompson, the Landholders' Society resolved to act in cooperation with the Association in England and formed a committee to correspond with the latter. It put forth its objects as "the prevention of the resumption of rent-free tenure; the extension of the permanent settlement...; the reform of the judicial, police and revenue systems for the better protection of all classes of people; the granting of waste lands to occupants on equitable terms so as to encourage the application of capital to the soil of India." An organisation mainly serving particular class interest could not prosper long in the circumstances of growing educated middle-class consciousness. Thus when that "apostle of humanity and civilization," "an eloquent advocate of Indian causes" the Secretary of British India Society, George Thompson came to India in 1843, on the invitation of Dwarka Nath Tagore, the main pillar of the Landholders' Society, a new Society was formed under the title of Bengal British India Society," with a broad-based membership. Its main purpose was "to promote the good of India, and the improvement,

efficiency and stability of this British Government", and its object was defined as "the collection and dissemination of information relating to the actual condition of the people of British India, and the laws and institutions, and resources of the country, and to employ such other means of peaceable and lawful character as may appear calculated to secure the welfare, extend the just rights, and advance the interests of all classes of our fellow subjects." The society was to adopt "such measures only as are consistent with pure loyalty to the person and Government of the reigning sovereign of the British dominions and the due observance of the Laws and Regulations of this country, and shall discountenance every effort to subvert legal authority or disturb the peace and well-being of society." The tenour of these objects set the pattern of the political associations of the last century and has a significance in the context of growing sentiments of revolt in the country. Both the Landholders' society and its rival were essentially non-agitational in their character, and as Thompson directed their operations were limited to collection of information and transmitting it to friends in England who could "make known your wishes and your wants" to the British public and government.

However, the spirit of freedom pervaded the atmosphere and resentment was brewing at the exclusion of Indians from responsible public employments and the law-making authority. The Indian press was eloquent in giving vehement expression to these aspirations. So also individuals did not hesitate to comment on the deprivation of Indians from higher employment and process of legislation. In an address, quoted by Mehrotra, reference was made to the tendency of making laws "without taking their (people's) opinion as to the tendency of those laws which purport to be conducive to their welfare. We are thus rendered ignorant of what passes within the Council-chamber, and hence is the reason that we are so often governed by laws which have a pernicious tendency to occasion and perpetuate our political degradation." Loss of political liberty followed from this condition. The Bengal British India Society, in its short career engaged itself in the study of many problems which exercised the public mind. It collected statistics regarding the condition of the tenantry; it drew attention to the extreme-



paucity of Indian employment in higher services, and brought to light defects in the judicial system and the administration of the country. But it protested against its being dubbed as a political body, and ceased to function after 1846. The demise of these early associations came at a time, however, when the entire country, more particularly the Hindu community in the three Presidencies, was convulsed by vehement antagonism to the christianising activities of the missionaries and the not unsubstantial apprehension of governmental collusion with them. Conversions to Christianity of some young boys raised a whirlwind of opposition and hasty withdrawal of students from missionary schools. The Indian press and religious associations denounced the Christian missions, and in that context did not spare the authorities as well. The public apprehension of the motives of government was fortified by the proposed legislation, called Lox Loci Act, which was aimed at removing the disability to inherit ancestral property on change of faith. The publication of the draft in 1845 provoked a tornado of opposition in the country which compelled the government to withdraw it. But in 1849 Dalhousie took up the thread anew and passed it into law, unmindful of the public resentment. The press in India and England was conscious of the "dissatisfaction and general discontent", and the Indian News prophesied 'that if the policy lately adopted and threatened to be pursued, continues, it is more than probable that some general and extensive revolution will ensue, in which the native army is more likely to join than to oppose'. The reaction of the countryside assumed the form of violent military revolt in 1857, which had not lacked support from some Indian language journals. The anger of the newly educated middle class in the metropolitan towns found expression in the formation of political associations in the three presidency towns, Calcutta, Madras and Bombay in 1851-1852'. Their foundation synchronised with the preparations for the revision of the Company's Charter in 1853, to influence whose form these organisations directed their attention and which inspired their establishment as well. The agitation connected with the renewal of the Charter had for its background, as Mehrotra has rightly observed, religious excitement, racial estrangement, economic and political discontent, steady

growth of education and public opinion and an increasing unification of the country. The influence of these factors is clearly visible in the character of the activities of the British India Association of Calcutta, the Native Association of Madras and the Bombay Association of Bombay, which sprang up almost simultaneously.

The initiative for such a move naturally was taken in Calcutta where having as an example before them of the fruitfulness of Anglo-Indian agitation against the so-called 'Black Act', the educated middle class felt the need of "offering a strongly united front to the Government in India as well as the United Kingdom". Consequently they established a National Association "to assert our legal rights by legitimate means" in their chagrin against the laws which "militate against the rights and possessions of the subjects" and the inequitable manner of judicial proceedings. However the name of this body with which the word national was associated and the militancy of its objectives appear to have estranged some of the influential members of the community and offended the government. Hence within forty-five days its name was altered to British Indian Association and its objects were declared to be "to promote the improvement and efficiency of the British Indian Government by every legitimate means in its power and thereby to advance the common interests of Great Britain and India to ameliorate the condition of the Native inhabitants of the subject territory". This tone contrasted with the temper of the people in the country at large which was fundamentally hostile to the continuance of foreign rule. The new Association was the old Landholders' Society in a new garb and was dominated by the upper strata of landowning and mercantile interests. Its pre-eminent purpose was to submit "such respectful but earnest representation to the Imperial Parliament of Great Britain on the occasion of the ensuing discussion of the East India Company's Charter as be calculated to remove the existing defects in the laws and the civil administration of the country and to promote the general welfare and interest of the people". At the same time it was resolved to seek a common bond with the educated community in the presidencies of Madras and Bombay and the North-Western Province

where either the branches of this association might be formed or independent organisations with similar objects be established. The sponsors clearly recognised the importance of rising above local interests and formulating national programme which might have greater weight with the authorities. The first to approach was Madras where the response assumed the shape of an independent society under the name of the Madras Native Association, though initially a branch of the Calcutta association was established with a life only of four months. But it was Poona where the earliest response came with the foundation of the Deccan Association. Its membership and funds came from the aristocracy of land and wealth. Within a few weeks a sum of rupees ten thousand was raised towards meeting the expense on the presentation of a petition to the Parliament. A list of grievances and wants was drawn up to form the basis of the petition. Their range was fairly comprehensive and included demands like security of land tenure, cheap and speedy justice abolition of salt tax, equalization of customs duties, greater expenditure on education and public works, prevention of the drain of Indian capital to England, larger representation of educated Indians in public services and legislatures. But this association met with the hostility of the officials and suffered an early death. However the western presidency did not fall behind the others and soon the Bombay Association was established with the object of making representations to the authorities regarding "measures calculated to advance the welfare and improvement of the country". It also decided to act in cooperation with the other Societies in petitioning the 'Imperial Parliament' on the "nature and constitution of the Indian Government". Thus in all the presidency towns political associations had been formed to acquaint the British Parliament of the wishes and aspirations of the Indian people and thereby mould the form and structure of the government in India. The proposals, though not uniform, were similar in their character and eloquently expressed the feelings and hopes of the educated middle class.

The petition submitted by the British Indian Association, to which others generally conformed, professed "deepest sentiments of loyalty and fidelity" to the British Crown and the desire for

“the permanence of the British supremacy in India, which has ensured them freedom from foreign incursions and intestine dissensions and security from spoliation by lawless power”. However it expressed dis-satisfaction with the Charter Act of 1833 as it had failed to make provision for “relaxation of the pressure of the revenue system, promotion of public works, the encouragement of the manufactures and commerce of the country....., improvement of the judiciary and the police, the education of the people” and above all appointment to higher offices. The most serious drawback of the existing system was that “the natives” had been denied “participation in those rights which are conceded by all constitutional governments, and which would qualify them to enjoy the benefit of free institutions at a future period”. Legislation in India was a function of the executive and its main prerogative. The Act of 1833 had paid lip service only to the principle of separation of powers by making provision for the fourth or law member who was to be associated with the Executive Council when it passed laws. But the people had little share in it, and it was so at a time when representative government was being experimented upon in the British colonies. Hence the British Indian Association and its counterparts in the other two presidencies gave considerable weight to the demand for a separate legislative body with due representation of Indian interests in it. Basing their stand on the “injuriousness of the union of executive and legislative functions in one body to the interests of the people”, they demanded the creation of a Legislative Council, separate from the Governor Generals’ Council, whose chief business would be to make laws, subject to veto by the Supreme Government, “possessing a popular character, so as in some respects to represent the sentiments of the people and to be so looked upon by them”. This Council was to consist of 17 members, of whom 12 were to be Indians, three each representing the four regions of Bengal, Madras, Bombay and North-western Province, and 5 Europeans—one Civil servant appointed by each of the four provincial governments and one by the Crown possessing legal qualifications who was to preside over it. Curiously enough system of election was not suggested, and the Indian members were to be nominated by the Governor General

in consultation with the provincial Governors. A safeguard however was provided by affording the people a right to object "on specific grounds" to any nomination made. Such a legislative council was to be invested with the "same powers in regard to the proposing, making and cancelling of laws", as were then vested in the Governor-General in Council.

Considerable weight was given to the independence of the legislature and its members. They were to be appointed for five years with an appropriate salary and were debarred from holding any office under the government. They were irremovable even by the Crown. Bills might be initiated by the legislative council, the Supreme Council or "any portion of the people by petition". The Bills passed were to be communicated to the Governor General in Council for final decision, which if not negatived within three months "would automatically be accepted as law". Any bill so disallowed might be recommended by the Legislative Council to the Parliament for enactment. Great emphasis was laid in the memorandum on the autonomy of the legislative council and the Court of Directors could not set aside any bill passed by it. Only the British Parliament was empowered to repeal or alter the laws so made and that might be done only by affording an opportunity to the Indian people to represent their case at the bar of the two Houses. Thus did the British Indian Association suggest a radical departure from the prevailing irresponsibility of executive government, savouring of despotism. The open door discussions in the legislature and due publicity to drafts of laws were suggested in order to associate the people with the law-making machine. It would mark a great advance from the secrecy and haste in which laws bearing on the social life and economic interests of the people were enacted.

Similarly Madras and Bombay associations also referred to the secrecy and closed-dooriness of legislative machinery. They also advocated inclusion of non-officials, mainly Indians, in the legislative council. The Madras petition desired separate legislative council for the presidency, "distinct from the executive and carrying on its deliberations with open doors, and containing both official and non-official members" in equal proportion, six or seven each. The former were to be nominated

by the government, while the latter were to be "selected by the Governor, out of a list of eighteen or twentyone persons, chosen by the votes of the rate-payers in Madras, and of persons eligible to serve on the Grand and Petty Juries." The intention was to afford "the official members in conjunction with the casting vote of the Governor when requisite" the means of carrying through "any point of absolute importance." It is clear that the Madras association did not contemplate any legislative body beyond the limits of the presidency and it was wholly opposed to "a single council of the whole of India" which even while popularly constituted "would never be able to distribute justice and effective government" to the entire population of British India "comprising so great a variety of races and language." The Bombay petition also demanded "a much larger share" to the Indians in the administration and suggested that "the Councils of the local Governments should, in matters of general policy and legislation, be opened, so as to admit of respectable and intelligent Natives taking a part in the discussion of matters of general interest to the country." The legislative council was to comprise judges of the Supreme Court and some of the European and Indian citizens as its members.

Apart from the nature of legislative organ, the petitions referred to the character of government under which administration of India was carried on. They were opposed to the dual government, the Court of Directors and the Board of Control, and Calcutta association recommended that "the future government of India should be vested in one body, consisting of 12 members—half of whom might be nominated by the Crown, the other half elected by a popular body." The Madras petition also expressed dissatisfaction with the existing system and suggested the formation of "another agency presided over by a secretary of state for the affairs of India." The Bombay association also was critical of the duality of control in London and suggested the establishment of one body, called the Indian Council. Some of its members might be elected and others nominated by the Crown. A minister was to preside over it and, besides him all members must have previous experience of India. The British Indian Association had also suggested that the "electors of the Council should be the holders of Government Promissory Notes

worth Rs. 25,000 or more." This would have afforded "the richer classes of India" also a voice in the election of the Indian Council." All the three bodies were opposed to the secrecy with which the government was carried on and rightly assumed that it was an attribute of bureaucratic government containing germs of despotism in it. They were critical of the inadequacy of information from the government about public affairs. They demanded frequent publication of reports regarding the activities of the government. The Madras association even went to the length of suggesting parliamentary enquiry every three or four years. Others also desired such enquiries once in ten years as they believed that thorough enquiry by the Parliament was a corrective of evils of government.

"All the three associations complained against the tendency towards the over-centralization of the Government of India". The British Indian Association wanted to limit its functions to "the disposal of political and military affairs, control over the Governors of several Presidencies, and a veto on the laws proposed by a Legislative Council specially appointed." It is not clear what actually they envisaged as a substitute, whether they wanted to leave the other aspects of administration to the local governments or had thought of decentralising administration by vesting powers to the local bodies which at the time did not exist. However, Madras and Bombay, dominated by the spirit of local autonomy, were mostly reiterating the objections of the two Presidency Governments to the centralising features of the Act of 1833 and the control exercised by the Government of India in the matter of finance and general administration. The Bombay petition pointed to the impairment of the efficiency of local governments by the need of constant reference to the Supreme Government even on trifling matters involving expenditure. The grievance of the Madras association was similar as it felt that the Government of India was callous to the "needs and representations of the local government." Both of them desired greater freedom for the presidency governments, though they did not deny the need of a central authority. All the petitions gave expression to the defects of the existing system and enumerated the grievances of the people. These related to "excessive taxation and the vexations which accompany its

collection", "insufficiency, delay and expense" involved in the administration of justice, "pressure of the revenue system", lack of public works like roads, inadequacy of the police, existence of gigantic government monopolies, depression of manufactures and commerce of the country, inadequacy of provision for education, excessive consumption of spiritous liquors arising from the nature of the excise policy of the government, and association of the Government with the Christian ecclesiastical establishment supported from state revenues. They petitioned for the lightening of the burden of taxation, particularly land-revenue, removal of reduction of Stamp Duty, expansion of educational facilities even the establishment of universities, and separation of the judiciary from the executive. The most powerful protest by all of them was against the exclusion of educated Indians from higher public services despite the declaration in the Act of 1833 of impartiality in the matter of employment. They objected to the exclusive European character of the civil service in India, which arose out of the provision that recruitment to higher services was open only to those persons who had been trained in the Haileybury College. The British India Association, therefore demanded throwing open of "public offices to public competition" both in the United Kingdom and India. It was their general feeling that as the Indians had done well in the judiciary, the higher posts in that branch should be available to them. There was general demand for lowering the cost of administration by reducing the salaries, exorbitantly high, then, paid to British civil servants in India. The Madras petition very pertinently demanded "increased employment of indigenous agency in the administration of the country", and in that context averred that "justice to the masses of the people in general, and towards the more intelligent of them in particular, requires that the hitherto prevalent system of governing the country through the exclusive medium of a Covenanted Civil Service should be, if not wholly, at least partially abandoned", and instead the "educated and trained natives, now acting as proxies in the performance of the functions normally assigned to these young and incompetent civilians" be placed under their responsibility. The vehemence of sentiments on this count is quite under-



standable as it reflected the disappointments of the neo-educated middle class, which constituted these associations.

The three presidency associations made similar demands as the existing system of government affected them equally, and their members were influenced by similar urges and inspirations. Their leaders were drawn from the educated middle class which had been fed on the western thought and literature. The Indian Press everywhere had played the same tune and moulded public thinking. The petitions, though couched in terms of loyalty to the British Crown, were condemnatory of the prevailing system of government which had debased the moral tone of the subject population and was frankly exploitative in its nature. Their demands were for better administration, reduction in the incidence of taxation, greater opening of the country by means of roads and canals, and better facilities for education. Association of the Indians with the government in a limited capacity was demanded by them, but there was no intention of establishing responsible parliamentary government or introducing elective system. Some form of restricted representative institutions was prayed for. They, however, made it clear that they were "fully sensible of, and are glad to acknowledge, the many blessings they enjoy under the British rule"; but bluntly denounced the "plan of government which it has hitherto been deemed expedient to provide for India; and which, being the result of circumstances, and not of design, is but little suited to the present state of the country, and to the fair demands of the people of India". A change was the main desideratum and that was what they prayed for. But their aspirations were limited and bounded by the circumstances of the situation. Their impact on the Charter Act of 1853 appears to have been rather insignificant for no step was taken in the direction of representative government and the Indians were kept aloof from the machinery of government as before. The value of these exercises in constitutional agitation is mainly in organising public opinion and providing it with a definite shape and form. The Indian Press lent greatest aid in this direction and heightened the tempo of propaganda against the system of government then in vogue. The failure of the political associations to affect the policies of government or its character must have added to the discontent of the people

and strengthened the resolve to oppose it by violent methods, which model of political action was then assuming a rigorous form in the country leading to the Revolt of 1857. Subsequent changes in the constitutional system may be traced to the Revolt, even though it was mercilessly crushed, than to the effectiveness of moderate political activity of the middle class associations in metropolitan towns.

The Charter Act of 1853 was almost a parody of the demands of the Indian associations. The double government continued to exist in England, there was no change in the nature or constitution of the government in India, the Supreme Government retained its supremacy, and though a Legislative Council was established to make laws at the centre, it was essentially an official body without a single Indian, official or non-official, in its membership. The principle of competition was accepted for admission to the covenanted service, but the examination was to be held in England with the inevitable consequences of keeping the Indians out of it. As Theodore Dickens wrote to Indians then it was to be "a competition among the educated youth of England, Ireland and Scotland. What share will you have in that competition and its rewards? None. The competition, otherwise a most wise and just provision, but rivets the bolts which shut in your faces the gates of exclusion." In other respects also, the British Parliament did not give heed to the humble petitions, couched in terms of loyalty, of the Indian political bodies. The imperial elephant was not swayed in its march by the feeble barkings of the middle class in the metropolitan towns. The repetition of petitions had no effect now, as the *Friend of India* put it it "excited the most homeopathic particle of attention", and gloated in the contempt with which these petitions had been treated. But the labours of the western educated Indians had not been vain. The "lethargy" and indifference "of native society" had been "stirred". The *Englishman* rightly felt that they could not long submit in patience to the 'misgovernment' as "the people of India" were "daily becoming more enlightened as to their own rights and the doings of their rulers". The failure of these moderate methods gave an edge to the revolt which was otherwise also building up in the country. An important result of the exercise in petition-

ing for constitutional changes was that their outlook of localism was dispelling and the feeling of commonness of interest and desire for unity of action were growing in the three presidencies, which was an essential preliminary to the development of nationalism. The leaders of the Revolt of 1857, which came soon after the failure of constitutional methods for change, also realised the value of united action which is evidenced in its extent and comprehensiveness. The Act of 1858 followed the suppression of the Revolt and swept away the trading company which had ruled India for a century. The transfer of power to the Crown, only a formality, did not introduce any immediate transformation in the structure of government, except that the duality of control in England was extinguished and Indian affairs came to be directly controlled by the Parliament through the government responsible to it. However, a major change came about in 1861 when the Indian Councils Act was passed and legislative councils were established both at the Centre and in the provinces with a few Indian members in them. But this step also bred disappointment as elective principle was not accepted and Indians, princes or aristocrats, were nominated by the Viceroy. Their attitude towards people's needs was marked by callous indifference or positive obstruction. At the same time the character of administration grew progressively rigid and its anti-Indian complexion was obvious. The revolt was cruelly suppressed leaving a trail of bitterness. The temper of the British officialdom was one of utter contempt for the Indians whom they derisively termed 'niggers', 'natives', 'barbarians'. In this atmosphere of mutual hatred and suspicion was bred the spirit of nationalism, expressing itself in the form of new associations transgressing local limits and aiming at united political action cutting across presidencies and provincial affiliations.

Among such political associations established for "promoting national feeling in India" and evoking "sympathy from the British public", the most prominent were the East India Association of London, Poona Sarvajanic Sabha, the Indian League and the Indian Association. In Calcutta, the British Indian Association had failed to satisfy 'the rising generation', 'the middle class of the population' as it did not accept the demand for lowering its membership fee and giving it a popular charac-

ter. In 1875, was founded the Indian League as a counterpoise to the British Indian Association at a time when the Calcutta Municipal Act was being revised. But this association did not last more than two years. Another society contemporaneously formed was the Indian Association with its object "to represent the people, and promote by every legitimate means, the political, intellectual, and national advancement of the people." Surendra Nath Banerji and Anand Mohan Bose were its leading members. The Association was intended to be "the centre of an all-India movement" with its branches in places outside Bengal, such as Kanpur, Allahabad and Lahore. Its most spectacular acts were the holding of a Native Press Conference at Calcutta in conjunction with the visiting delegation of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha and organising massive demonstration against the Vernacular Press Act. Its success was meagre in building itself up as a national organisation, yet it helped to promote national feeling and had an appeal to the imagination of the educated classes. The Indian Association also protested vehemently against the lowering of the ages for entry into the Indian Civil Service and Banerji toured India to organise national opposition to this measure. Similarly in the western presidency, the failure of the Bombay Presidency Association to keep pace with the mounting tempo of political fervour and its inability to give expression to the legitimate progressive sentiments of the educated community led to the foundation of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha. Its object was declared to be to act as "a mediating body (between the government and the people) which may afford to the latter facilities for knowing the real intention and objects of Government as well as adequate means for securing their rights, by making a true representation of the real circumstances in which they are placed". A novel feature of the Sabha was that its members were bound to submit power of attorney by at least fifty adults that he represented them. In this manner the representative character of that Sabha was emphasised. Its main work was to consider proposed legislation as well as existing laws and "all matters connected with the public weal". A number of memorials were submitted to government pertaining to the grievances of the people. But its usefulness was not limited merely to memorialising the government. It

organised a swadeshi movement, took the famine relief and instituted a thorough enquiry into the condition of agricultural community. However, its greatest contribution was in stimulating political activity and was looked upon with suspicion by the government. It opposed the Vernacular Press Act vehemently and lent its support to the protest against the lowering of the age for entry into the Indian Civil Service. The Sabha thus developed into a mighty force in rousing the middle classes of Western India and engendering national consciousness. The East Indian Association of London also contributed towards the same end, though its effectiveness was limited in so far as its object of having its branches in the main cities of India was not fully realised. Yet by constantly putting the Indian case before the English public it helped to stir political feelings in India. Dadabhai Naroji was the chief architect of this association.

A most significant role in the direction of promoting national consciousness and stimulating political activity was that of the Indian Association, formed in 1876 by some younger members of the Indian League in their discontent with the narrow aims of that association. They planned to organise "a broad-based political association" with the object of "representing the people, of educating the people on all industrial, educational and other topics of general interest" towards the end of preparing "healthy public opinion". Among its members were many who had been educated in England and were influenced by ideas of liberty and parliamentary democracy which they wished to instal in India. From the beginning it strove to rise above local or provincial feelings and organise political action on an all India basis. Till the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885, this association kept national interests foremost in public eye and opposed anti-national government measures. Hence its programme included mainly such issues as were likely to "unite all sections of the educated community in Bengal and elsewhere in the country". One of the most important subjects it took up in its early years was opposition to the reduction of the upper age limit for the civil service examination from 21 to 19 years brought about in the time of Lytton. The Indian Association organised a 'national protest' against it. Surendra

Nath Banerjee visited important towns in northern and southern India, held meetings protesting against the government decision and brought about a homogeneity of feelings and aspirations among the educated people there. This step was the most active agent in building up the sense of nationalism and preparing the way for united political action. Enthused by the success of civil service agitation, the Association planned to establish itself as the national organisation of India. Its branches were established in several towns of Bengal and in the provinces of northern India. It had a close liaison with the Poona Sarva-Janik Sabha, Bombay Association and Madras Native Association.

The Indian Association had declared its aims as (1) "The creation of a strong body of public opinion in the country, (2) the unification of the Indian races and peoples upon the basis of common political interest and aspirations, (3) the promotion of friendly feelings between Hindus and Mohammadans and (4) the inclusion of the masses in the great public movement of the day." These were laudable objects, though the situation then was not auspicious for their full realisation. However, the Association exploited every grievance of the people to rouse public opinion and thereby pressurise the government for its redress. It met with remarkable success in its agitation against the civil service regulations which resulted in the formation of many branches over the country. Opposition to the Vernacular Press Act was voiced and occasion was taken to "protest against the exemption of a large class of cotton goods from import duty." In 1880 it decided to formulate a scheme of representative government for India. Other subjects which merited its attention were the rent act, local self-government, education system and equality of Indians and Englishmen in judicial trials. An important event, however, was the convening of two all-India Conferences, one in December 1883 and the other in December 1885. These were named National Conferences which persons from various parts attended. In the first conference subjects discussed related to civil service, technical education, representative legislative councils, a national council and Ilbert Bill. The second conference was held simultaneously with the first session of the Indian National Congress, though both were

unaware of the deliberations of each other. In this manner the Indian Association prepared the soil for the establishment of a body like the Indian National Congress. The demand for such an organisation was voiced by Surendra Nath Banerjee in the Bengalee of 27 May 1882, in the following words : "Hitherto our public bodies have acted without concert or cooperation, which alone can invest our public movements with a truly representative character. The time has truly come when a great National Congress meeting once a year, may cement bonds of unity among the Indian races and prepare the way for concerted action in reference to political matters among the different political bodies scattered throughout the country". This was no mere aspiration to be attained in a distant future. There was a ferment in political thinking and events were heading to the emergence of nationalism which was growing in volume and tending to develop into a mighty flood sweeping all obstacles in its path.

## *The Indian National Congress— Birth & Adolescence*

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The birth of the Indian National Congress coincided with and was the consequence of a growing tide political discontent and rising sentiment of nationalism. Events in a decade preceding its foundation in December 1885 exposed the true character of British imperialism. Though British contact with India had not been without some benefits to its people, yet the changes made towards modernisation were primarily motivated by self-interest of the rulers. Indian leaders of the nineteenth century were impressed by its record of promoting conditions for the unity of India and establishment of an era of peace and order in the country, in glaring contrast to the anarchy, internal feuds and predatoriness of the rulers which prevailed earlier. Unity of administration throughout the country, and wider establishment of internal peace promoted a sense of one-ness among the people and created conditions for their moral and material development. Introduction of a public system of schools and colleges along with acquaintance with western nationalistic thought, led to the development of liberal thinking and critical appreciation of imperial rule to which they were subjected. "The growth of mass communications", linking of the distant parts of the country by means of roads and railways, facilitated communication and transport and thereby brought in the people growth of the spirit of national unity. The establishment of new machine industries created conditions for material progress. It was no mean record of achievements of British rule, but all it did was mainly in the interest of the ruling people, for the



promotion of the empire. Naturally, therefore, the benefit to the Indian people was limited and failed to promote their welfare. Pressure of taxation, increasing exploitation of economic resources by the foreigners, mounting military expenditure and charges on the so-called "home-charges" and growing public debt with a high rate of interest enhanced the burden of the people and operated to aggravate poverty of the masses. The overbearing attitude of the ruling race and its arrogant behaviour towards the subject population, howsoever high and respectable the individual might be, added to the sense of humiliation of the ruled and led to the disaffection of the educated middle class, which was increasing in number and importance in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. "Imperialism by its very nature" is "incompatible with democracy and self-government". Its basis is military power and as long as it is assured of this superiority, it is "little disposed to self-liquidation". There was therefore little possibility of response to the demand raised by the new leadership for democratic institutions and removal of shackles. Economic and legislative measures in the time of Lytton and the disillusionment even in the liberal regime of Ripon, heightened discontent and hastened explosion of nationalism for which the Indian National Congress prepared the path.

The administration of Lord Lytton further alienated the people and created an almost explosive situation. "Economic and political discontent grew to alarming proportions". The Indian Mirror rightly commented that if the viceroyalty of Lytton had run its full course "India would not have escaped without witnessing some great convulsion." Conditions were "bordering on revolution", and Pheroze Shah Mehta believed that the British rule was passing through an "anxious and critical period". Lytton, as he observed, "left the country in a state of doubt and perplexity". Hume, as reported by Wedderburn, had learnt from his contact with religious leaders that "ominous unrest prevailed" throughout the country, which pervaded even the lowest strata of the population", and which might "lead to some terrible outbreak". He believed that British rule was "then truly in extreme danger of a most terrible revolution". From a mass of material which he had occasion to examine he inferred that "poor men were pervaded with a sense of the hopelessness

of the existing state of affairs; that they were convinced that they would starve and starve and die, and that they wanted to do something...and that something meant violence". Hume did not apprehend immediate revolt against government but "a sudden violent outbreak of sporadic crimes" which might ultimately develop into a "national revolt". There is little reason to disbelieve Hume's estimate of the Indian situation, as the spirit of revolt, the sparks of fire which had burnt in 1857, was not yet extinguished and some of the measures of administration in the days of Lytton would have fanned the fire to break forth into a mighty conflagration. That the passion for revolt was not yet dormant was proved by the Wahabi movement, the Kuka rising, indigo disturbances, Deccan agrarian riots and the mass outbreaks in the tribal territory of Chhota Nagpur. Though the general open revolt had been cruelly suppressed in 1858 with its aftermath of official terrorism and judicial abuse spreading reign of terror, it was inconceivable that the individuals and families would easily forget the vengefulness of the rulers and their inequitable and apacious behaviour. Little was done by the government to heal the wounds and assuage the feelings while Lytton's administration applied salt to the sores. The unseemly haste with which the Vernacular Press Act was enacted enraged the intellectual middle class and provoked a mighty wave of resentment and agitation. The Arms Act further proved that racial discrimination was the marked characteristic of British imperialism under which the Indian people were to submit to inequality and humiliation. The lowering of the age of admission to the competition for the Indian Civil Service, for which examination was held only in England, barred the entry of Indians into higher service which was to be the monopoly of British subjects. Recurring famines and the holding of the Darbar in Delhi to mark the assumption of the title of Empress of India by the Queen of England, with its massive waste of public revenues at a time when Indians were dying of starvation in large numbers further provided evidence of the callous indifference of the rulers to the interests of the ruled. The cup of humiliation was full, Resentment against government was mounting and though Ripon's repeal of the Vernacular Press Act and initiation of measures for Local Self Government helped to assuage the

injured feelings of the middle class, yet the ugly agitation by the European community against the Ilbert Bill, a measure contrived to restore the prestige of Indians, made the elite realise the futility of depending merely on the goodwill of the British people and their sense of justice and fairplay.

The lowering of age for entry into the Indian Civil Service met with a determined opposition from the new middle class and stirred agitation against the measure, which assumed the magnitude of an all-India movement. There was considerable opposition to the competitive examination being held only in London, and as early as 1856 the British Indian Association had voiced the demand for simultaneous examination being held in India. There was no response to the repeated prayers of the Indians for this concession, rather British opinion was hardening to impose further checks on the entry of Indians into this most prestigious service. Only ten Indians had been successful between 1862 and 1875, but even this small number was sufficient to alarm the British authorities, and in 1876 the maximum age for admission to the examination was further reduced to 19 years, which made it difficult for the Indians to go to London and compete. Educated India naturally opposed the reduction as being prejudicial to their interests and motivated by considerations of racial prejudice. Hence they decided to offer strong resistance to this move "to effectively thwart their ambition for entering" into the Indian Civil Service. This "question was eminently suited to become the battle-cry of an all-India movement. It united men of different classes, creeds and provinces in India by providing them with a genuine grievance and a righteous cause" (Mehrotra). Surendra Nath Banerjee and Anand Mohan Bose utilised it to organise a 'national protest' and turned it into 'a national question'. Banerjee's whirlwind tour of the chief towns of India brought about the conviction of a unity of purpose and promoted prospects of united action on national issues, "of a political agitation coordinated on an all-India basis by Indians themselves." Closely following on the heels of the Civil Service agitation came the universal protest against the Vernacular Press Act, which further strengthened national feeling and exhibited solidarity of interest between the people of various provinces and creeds. The comments of the Indian press were most bitter

against the alien government and mirrored the disaffection of the people. It was clearly evident that political agitation had transcended the provincial limits and attained an all-India national status.

Ripon had poured oil on surging waters, and by his sympathetic attitude towards the Indians, his liberalism and respect for democracy and liberty had helped to assuage the ruffled feelings. His scheme of Local Self-Government was accepted by the educated Indians as a precursor of representative government. The educated Indians considered it as a first step towards the "general introduction of representative institutions in India and finally to national self-government." The Mahratta of Poona regarded it as "the foundation-stone of our remote independent political existence"; and to the Hindu it was "the foundation of the great future Representative Government in India." The Bengalee voiced the demand for provincial self-government and greater power to the provincial assemblies in matters financial. These fanciful anticipations of the Indians evoked stout opposition in Conservative British and Anglo-Indian circles which condemned the measure as "revolutionary and dangerous". It was considered by some as a step towards "gradually transferring political power from European to Indian hands." The indifference of bureaucracy which resented "their proposed elimination" and the half-heartedness with which the scheme was applied soon brought disappointment and the dreams of early progress towards provincial or national self-government were demolished. The Secretary of State and his Council tried to defeat its main purpose. A further jolt was provided by the vehemence of Anglo-Indian opposition to the Ilbert Bill which was intended "to rectify an anomaly in the Criminal Procedure Code which restricted the jurisdiction of the Indian members of the covenanted service." That European criminals might be tried by a first class Indian magistrate was treated as anathema by the European community in India and a vehement agitation, even contemplating violence, was organised by it. Mehrotra's analysis of the genesis of the "White mutiny" is that "the pride and prejudice" of belonging to the dominant race, the contempt for Indians and 'white niggers', the unwillingness to part with a

privilege they had long enjoyed and cherished, the threat to their wayward life in the mofussil, the fear that they might not get a fair trial at the hands of the Indian magistrates, and the hostility to officials all these might probably have sufficed to give rise to a violent agitation against the Ilbert Bill on the part of non-official Anglo-Indians, but what really swelled and sustained that agitation was the widespread feeling of disgust and discontent among Britons, both in India and at home, at Ripon's liberal and pro-Indian policies. It was this latter feeling which stirred and united non-official Anglo-Indians all over the country and secured for their agitation against their government of India the sympathy of the vast majority of British officials in India and the people at home".

The Anglo-Indian agitation brought forth to the surface the real instinct of the ruling class about the basic character of British rule, "the fundamental principles upon which the Government of India" was to be conducted. The theory of conquest of India by sword and holding it by the sword was affirmed in the course of agitation. The idea of running the government for the welfare of the subject people, and preparing them to manage their affairs at some future date was ridiculed and the principle asserted that "their welfare depends on the maintenance of our (British) supremacy." It was this aspect of the matter which affected the Indian people as the acceptance of this theory would close for ever all avenues of introducing representative government in India and paving the way for self-government. The "racial arrogance and bad manners on the part of Anglo-Indians" who did not hesitate to abuse and malign the Indians, shocked the people and led to severe condemnation of the abusive tone of Anglo-Indian agitation by the Indian Press. Also there was growing a solidarity of feelings among the various sections of the people all over India. The Indian Mirror advocated "strong union of feelings and interest among the Native races", and the Tribune pleaded for "unity of action." The wave of "bitter resentment against their Anglo-Indian traducers" swept over the country and helped to unite Indians. The Indian Mirror remarked: "We are being abused on all sides in the foulest language. We should appreciate the degradation of our position, gather up our

energies and cast off those failings of character which tend to hamper our efforts to become a nation instead of the auguries of races we are now." The Ilbert Bill agitation had provoked the younger generation in Calcutta to pay back the Anglo-Indians in the same coin, but they were restrained from resorting to extreme action by the elder leaders who did not want to create further difficulties for Ripon in whom they had great trust. Yet it will be correct to say that this agitation provided an object lesson to the Indian leaders regarding the value of organised all-India agitation for gaining their objectives, and prepared the soil for the establishment of an organisation which would transcend provincial and sectional barriers and represent the wishes and sentiments of the Indian people as a whole. The birth of the Indian National Congress was in response to this need.

Reference has been made earlier to the efforts made by the Indian Association to convene a national conference and two such meetings were held in 1883 and 1885. The sentiment of nationalism was growing powerful day by day. Allan Octavian Hume, a retired civil servant, further evoked this spirit by his exhortation to the graduates of Calcutta University. On 1 March 1883, he appealed to the educated Indians to "constitute.....the most important source of all mental, moral, social and political progress in India", and it is to them that the "country must look for the initiative." He emphasised the need for union and desired them to organise an association for undertaking national work. He wrote, "You are the salt of the land. And if amongst even you, the elite, fifty men cannot be found with sufficient power of self-sacrifice, sufficient love for and pride in their country, sufficient genuine and unselfish heartfelt patriotism to take the initiative, and if needs be, devote the rest of their lives to the cause-then there is no hope for India.....If you, picked men, the most highly educated of the nation, cannot, scorning personal ease and selfish objects, make a resolute struggle to secure greater freedom for yourselves and your country, a more impartial administration, a larger share in the management of your own affairs, then we your friends are wrong, and our adversaries right; then are Lord Ripon's noble aspirations for your good

fruitless and visionary; then, at present, at any rate, all hopes of progress are at an end, and India truly neither lacks nor deserves any better government than she now enjoys." Though no immediate response was visible, yet the events of 1884 showed that the advice was not wasted. The enthusiasm evinced in organising farewell functions at the time of Ripon's departure from India, the sense of discipline and moderation exhibited in the Ilbert Bill controversy, Surendra Nath Banerjee's move to raise a national fund for national work and the holding of the National Conference by the India Association at the close of 1883, all give ample proof of the new national spirit which prevailed among the elite of the country. The Native Opinion of 11 January 1885, referring to Ripon's contribution to Indian national advancement, wrote "Of all the benefits that have resulted to this country from the administration of Lord Ripon the unity of thought and action, which has been produced or called into existence among the natives of this country by the various conflicts and agitations that took place, is by far the most important. Since his administration a feeling of nationality has been introduced into every corner of the empire and India is no longer to be viewed as a mere geographical name having no corresponding national existence" (quoted by Mehrotra).

This national consciousness found expression in the efforts to organise a political organism to voice the grievances of the people and make representation to the British people and their Parliament for their redress and promotion of representative government in India. Hume was most active in meeting the leaders of provincial political associations and preparing opinion for the holding of "an annual conference of representative men from all parts of India", the organisation of a central "national association" to direct political activity "throughout the country" and "preparation of a charter of Indian demands". A consensus appears to have emerged, and with that Hume went to England to seek advice from his friends and sympathisers of the Indian cause. There was general support for this move in friendly British circles. About the same time, when the Theosophical Convention met at Adyar in Madras, a few prominent Indians gathered privately at the residence of Raghunath Rao

and drew up a programme of action which included an item for the holding of "an annual conference of the delegates of the Central Associations at places to be determined at each Conference. This meeting was fairly representative of political opinion in various provinces. In addition, the India Association of Calcutta had decided to hold the Conference at the end of December. It appears all these moves were independent of each other. However, they reveal that Indian political opinion was seeking outlet through an all-Indian organisation to provide a platform for giving expression to the aspirations of the elite and channeling action for their implementation.

Before sailing for England, Hume had issued a circular letter in which he emphasised the need of setting up an all-India organisation and intimated that the Conference would be held in December 1885 in Poona, and in that context stated, "The conference will be composed of delegates—leading politicians well acquainted with the English language—from all parts of the Bengal, Bombay and Madras Provinces". The objects of the Conference were defined as (1) enabling "all the most earnest labourers in the cause of national progress to become personally known to each other, (2) to discuss and decide upon the political operations to be undertaken during the ensuing year". And further it was added that "Indirectly the Conference will form the germ of a Native Parliament and, if properly conducted, will constitute in a few years an unanswerable reply to the assertion that India is still wholly unfit for any form of representative institutions". This first letter was a confidential one addressed to the inner circle of the Indian National Union which Hume had established earlier. Finding considerable sympathy for such a move from his friends in England and possibly with the consent of the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, Hume issued invitations to the various Associations in the country to participate in the conference by nominating their delegates. The November Circular indicated that its purpose was "to discuss questions of national importance", and argued; "The discussion of public questions by representative men assembled from all parts of the country cannot fail to have a most salutary effect upon the formation of public opinion and even on the course of legislation. The time has also perhaps come, when the public interests



demand that a common programme should be accepted as the basis of united action on the part of the different public bodies scattered throughout the country". Also an idea was given of the prominent subjects which might engage the attention of the Conference. These were the reconstitution of the Legislative Councils ; the native volunteer movement, reduction in military expenditure ; the civil service question ; separation of the judiciary from the executive authority ; and the reorganisation of police. The invitation appears to have met with satisfactory response and representatives from various parts of the country, from Punjab and N.W.P. in the north to Madras in the south to the modest number of 72, assembled in Bombay from 28 to 30 December 1885 and thus founded the Indian National Congress which subsequently became the principal organ of political opinion in India and guided the movement towards independence. It was preceded by the provincial conference in Madras, and the Calcutta Conference convened by the Indian Association called by Surendra Nath Banerjee.

There is some controversy about the object which prompted Hume to take this step, as also about its character. There is also difference of view regarding the association of Dufferin with this venture. It was mentioned by W.C. Bannerji, the first President of the Congress, that Hume had originally conceived the idea of having an all-India body to discuss matters of social reform, but was dissuaded by Dufferin from adopting that course, because such an organisation for removing social evils would not be of much use. Hence he suggested the formation of a political organisation which would indicate to the government the defects of administration and the mode of their removal. What Dufferin is supposed to have wished for was a political organisation which should perform the same functions in India as Her Majesty's Opposition did in England. Thereupon Hume gave it a political complexion. There is little doubt of Hume meeting the Viceroy and apprising him of his move, but it would be wrong to assume that Hume had any intention of using the Conference for social reform purposes. The entire trend of his efforts since 1883 had been towards the formation of a political body and knowing full well the divergences in feeling on social questions, he did not wish this organisation to engage in social

problems. Bannerji's view is supported by Wedderburn and led Lala Lajpat Rai to believe that Dufferin and Hume engineered to create an "innocuous and loyal political organisation to serve as a safety-valve for the escape of the mounting dangers that beset the British Empire". That Dufferin was consulted and knew of Hume's plan is borne out by his letter to the Governor of Bombay, dated 17 May 1885, but he had misgivings about it. He wrote that the "functions of such an assembly must of necessity consist in criticising the acts and policy of Government and in formulating demands which probably it would be impossible to grant". Later in 1886 Dufferin pleaded his innocence to Northbrook by writing : "But there is one thing I have carefully abstained from doing, and that is from stimulating the popular desire for radical change, and from raising hopes and expectations which it may not be possible to fulfil". His comments that it was the 'Babu Congress' and orders for dissociating public servants from the Congress have reference to later developments and cannot prove his ignorance of Hume's intentions or of the project itself.

The assemblage of the Indian National Congress was merely one expression of the growing movement for the establishment of a national organisation to give vent to the political demands and aspirations of the elite. The almost simultaneous meetings of two such bodies in the Christmas week of 1885 was a clear index of the growing consciousness and urgency of having an all-India political association which would coordinate provincial efforts and present a united demand before the rulers. Nonetheless, the fact that the initiative for such a move was taken by an Englishman, formerly a part of the bureaucratic machine, raises the question of his motives in resorting to this step. Hume subscribed to the liberal creed and was in intimate contact with the band of British publicmen who believed in the benevolent character of the empire. In his official career he was known for his sympathy for the Indian subjects and took active interest in their welfare. His unflinching support to Ripon in his progressive measures of administration and his endeavours to persuade Indian leaders to help the Viceroy in his mission afford a clear indication of his attitude of moulding the administration to the interest of the people. Moreover he was genuinely

convinced that unless the empire exposed its benevolent aspect there was real danger to its stability in India. At the same time, like many of the educated Indians during this period, he felt that British connection with India was an instrument of its progress and a step towards the ultimate establishment of representative government in this country. His analysis of the contemporary situation, which was fraught with danger to the stability of British rule owing to the rising trend towards sporadic violence among the people and the increasing Russian pressure on the frontiers, compelled him to assume early initiative to create an organisation which would bring within its fold the moderate elements among the educated middle class. Ripon was no less conscious of the "grave implication" of the spirit of discontent prevailing in the country. He wrote, "A movement has begun which will advance with greater rapidity and force every year. Such a condition of affairs is one in which the task of government and specially despotic government is beset with difficulties of no light kind; to move too fast is dangerous but to lag behind is more dangerous still; and the problem is how to deal with this new born spirit of progress so as to direct it into a right course and prevent it from becoming a source of serious political danger." Hume may have taken his clue from Ripon. In his letter to Colvin, the Lt. Governor of the North-Western Province, he denied the charge that the establishment of the Congress was premature. In that context, he wrote, "no choice was left to those who gave the primary impetus to the movement. The ferment due to the creation of western ideas, education, invention and appliances, was at work with a rapidly increasing interest, and it became of paramount importance to find for its products an overt and constitutional channel for discharge, instead of leaving them to fester, as they had already commenced to do under the surface." He further wrote, "A safety-valve for the escape of great and growing forces, generated by our own action, was urgently needed, and no more efficacious safety-valve than our Congress movement could possibly be devised." It has also been hinted by certain writers that Hume wanted to take "the steam out of Surendra Nath Banerjee's ship by starting a parallel organization and took care to associate with it only moderate and loyal

elements." Banerjea was a radical in Hume's eye, but there does not seem to have been any great gap between his thinking and that of the leaders who joined the Congress. Hume of course knew of Banerjea's move and as such the unseemly haste and secrecy with which he took the step to convene the Congress in Bombay would suggest his keenness to keep the strings of political activity in his hands and not allow it to drift under control by the Calcutta leaders. The atmosphere was surcharged with sentiments of nationalism and discontent with the principles which governed the policies of the empire. Not merely the educated section of the community was nourishing its injured sentiments, but "the agricultural classes, orthodox sections and the newly awakened Hindus inspired by the glories of the past and moved by the appeals" of religious reformers "to adhere to the traditional values to the exclusion of exotic western cultural standards," were no less inspired by sentiments of change. The Indian leaders were keen on an 'all-India institution and even if Hume had not taken the initiative a body of that nature would not have taken long to emerge." Thus, whether the Congress was intended to be a safety-valve for the preservation of British Empire by Hume or was a natural outcome of the then circumstances, need not detract from its importance as the principal venue for the political progress of India.

The Indian National Union launched by Hume in 1884 took the initiative to convene the first meeting of the Indian National Congress at Poona in the last week of December 1885. The Union had as its aim "to oppose, by all constitutional methods, all authorities high or low, here or in England whose acts or omissions are opposed to the principles of the Government of India laid down by the British Parliament and endorsed by the British Sovereign." Its programme included submission of a "monster memorial" to Parliament demanding purge or transformation of the India Council, modification of the existing legislative councils so as to make them representative and enable them to have effective voice in the disposal of revenues. These objectives were clearly reflected in the proceedings of the first session of the Congress, which was originally intended to be held in Poona, with the Sarvajanic Sabha acting as hosts. But

at the last moment, owing to the outbreak of cholera there, the venue was shifted to Bombay, where it met in the Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College on 28 December 1885. Delegates from all parts of India to the number of 72, attended the Congress and W.C. Bonnerji, an eminent lawyer of Calcutta, was elected as its President. In his opening remarks Bannerji emphasised "the representative and constitutional character" of the meeting. He outlined the objects of the Congress which were to be : (a) "The promotion of personal intimacy and friendship amongst all the more earnest workers in our country's cause in various parts of India, (b) eradication of all possible race, creed or provincial prejudices and fuller development and consolidation of sentiments of national unity, (c) authoritative record of the mature opinions of the educated classes in India on some of the more important and pressing of the political (and social) questions of the day, and (d) determination of the lines upon and methods by which during the next twelve months it is desirable for native politicians to labour in the public interests." Bannerji was cautious enough to repudiate the charge that the Congress was "a nest of conspirators and disloyalists," and affirmed in unequivocal terms loyalty to British connection. However he stressed the demand for representative government in which people should have their proper and legitimate share. Loyalty to British Government was the fundamental creed of the early Congress and method of operation was to be constitutional agitation for reform in administration. The trend of speeches in the three day session followed the pattern set by the President and the resolutions passed were far from being radical, but were "couched in mild terms and showed great deference towards the British rulers." All what they asked for was the "widening of the basis of government and giving people their proper and legitimate share in it." The resolutions called for (1) parliamentary enquiry into the moral and material progress of India, (2) abolition of the Council of Secretary of State for India, (3) reform of the legislative councils, (4) holding of simultaneous competitive examinations for the Indian Civil Service in England and India and raising the eligibility age to 23 years, (5) reduction in military expenditure and (6) reimposition of customs duty on import of cloth. Opposition was also voiced to the

annexation of Upper Burma to India. These were in tune with the prevailing political opinion in India for which agitation had been carried on for some years by the political associations and the press. And as Dadabhai Naoroji put it their main object was "to demand for the rights of British subjects, as British subjects." Thus there was nothing revolutionary about this session which would cause offence to British rulers.

The Congress was not heralded by any fanfare and the leaders exhibited extreme moderation in putting forth their demands or commenting on the nature of government. But the very fact that it was national in character and brought representatives from different parts of the country on to one platform and voiced the sentiments and aspirations of the educated India made this gathering of special significance and thereby heralded the commencement of a new age and "beginning of a national political life, destined to produce a profound change in the immediate future" G.S. Aiyar distinctly affirmed its national character when he said, "From today we can with greater propriety than heretofore speak of an Indian nation of national opinion and national aspirations." This aspect was stressed by the Indian Press, which hailed Congress with one voice as the harbinger of a new era. To the *Indu Prakash* it marked the "beginning of a new life" which would "help in creating a national feeling." The fact of development of "united nationality" and the Congress as "the nucleus of a future Parliament" was stressed by many others. The certainty of meeting on a common platform and uniting for "common political good" was emphasised by the *Hindu Patriot*. The *Hindu* commented on the "moderation and coolness" of the Indian reformers which characterised this first national gathering and hoped that "a policy and a programme adopted by the collective wisdom of leading lights in all parts of India and urged under a common understanding are sure to receive consideration than otherwise. Indian opinion will then acquire an influence and prestige which cannot be obtained by isolated and unorganized efforts. The spirit of patriotism will spread abroad and lead to the gradual diffusion and consolidation of public opinion." It was not so much the demand for constitutional change or greater employment opportunities which caught the imagination of the press and

the people, as these had been demanded by various political organisations, but the principle of nationalism, the feeling of oneness and the possibility of united action which enthused the country and held out hopes of a better future. The Congress "threw a bold challenge to the powers that be, gave a warning to the rulers that India was no longer willing to leave her fate exclusively in the hands of the aliens, and that she was determined to shape her destiny herself." It "provided the lead and the country accepted its guidance" (Tara Chand).

The first session of the Congress set the pattern for subsequent meetings in the next decade or two. The keynote of the speeches was loyalty to the British Crown and their tone was moderate and apologetic. The trend of resolutions conformed broadly to the path laid down in Bombay. The main demands related to the expansion of legislative councils, both in their numerical strength and the powers to be exercised by them. The mode of their constitution was to be the adoption of the methods of election on which early leaders set great store, though franchise was to be limited and direct election was not to be the rule. There was also recurring insistence on the increase in the proportion of Indians in higher services and simultaneous examination for the Indian Civil Service in India was pressed for year after year. Similar was the case with the demand for reduction in military expenditure, economy in civil expenditure, growth of elementary education, and fixity of land revenue demand. The Congress was not merely giving expression to the interests and aspirations of the educated middle class but gradually it adopted a truly national role and represented the interests of the vast mass of people engaged in agricultural operations. In 1891 it adopted a resolution drawing pointed attention to the miserable existence of the millions of population who were victims of starvation, and analysed the causes of their piteous condition. The factors responsible for growing poverty were stated to be (a) the exclusion of the people of India from a due participation in the administration and all control over the finances of their own country, (b) the extravagant cost of the administration, (c) growing military expenditure and (d) a "short-sighted system of Land Revenue administration," prejudicial to improvement in agriculture. This led to the demand for fixity in land-revenue paid by

the land holders and rent paid by the farmers to their landlords. Permanent Settlement was the panacea for this evil and the Congress pressed for it from year to year. The interests of the mercantile community were also not ignored and there was genuine desire for the promotion of infant industry which had sprouted in the metropolitan towns. The demand for reimposition of customs duty on import of cotton goods and later opposition to the excise duty were expressions of this sentiment. Resolutions relating to salt tax were motivated by the desire to lower the burden of the poorer sections of society. In 1887 the Congress also advocated exemption of incomes below Rs. 1000 from income-tax. All these years the Congress did not hesitate, however, to expose the illiberal and unsympathetic nature of bureaucratic administration and brought to surface the grievances of the people, largely as a result of the economic and financial policies of the government. It also focussed opinion on the drain of wealth from India, a subject earnestly emphasised by Dadabhai Naoroji and other Indian economists. But the major emphasis was laid on constitutional reforms, and enlargement of opportunities for higher public service to the Indians. Year after year resolutions were adopted to these ends. In the early period public opinion was largely exercised on these two matters. And there was some response from the government also. In 1892 the Indian Councils Act was passed by British Parliament increasing the numerical strength of the Legislative Councils at the Centre and in the provinces. Also there was provision for the establishment of councils in North-West-Province and Punjab. The principle of limited election was also enunciated and the procedure was left to be fixed by rules to be made. However, the mode of elections failed to satisfy public opinion and the demand for reform continued to exist. In the matter of public services, the only response was the appointment of a Public Service Commission whose report ten years later failed to meet the aspirations of the people. Yet it will not be correct to assume that the Indian National Congress had little impact on the country. The object before the leaders was good government, wide employment of Indians in higher offices and the establishment of representative institutions. These problems according to the then leadership "lay at the root of all



other Indian problems" and were believed to pave the path to self-government. What they insisted upon was "a change from an irresponsible system of government to one based on consultation with the representatives of the people." And in their thinking this end would be achieved mainly by the good-will and cooperation of British people.

The Congress began with a limited membership of seventytwo delegates at Bombay, but this number rose steadily year after year. At the second session in Calcutta 434 delegates attended while at the third at Madras the number was 607. In 1889 at Allahabad membership numbered 1272 to fall again in the next four years to 625 (lowest) but it increased to 1584 at Poona and 1740 at Lucknow in the year 1899. The province where the Congress was held in a particular year contributed the highest number, more than half of the total. Thus by the end of the century, it had attracted popular attention, though it may be difficult to regard it as a representative body. The membership was drawn from various provinces, classes and communities. The professional classes, such as teachers, lawyers and editors, sent the largest number and it was natural too, for they constituted the bulk of the educated middle class. The business community was poorly represented in the early years but the landowners forming the aristocracy generally kept aloof. The latter by their situation, training and mode of life could scarcely be interested in a political organisation, speaking for the people and criticising the acts and operations of government. The demand for land reforms was largely voiced in the interest of the agriculturist and hence failed to enthuse the land-owning class. Hindus, Parsis and Sikhs had from the beginning been closely associated with the Congress, but among the Muslims, a powerful propaganda was launched by Sir Syed Ahmad, mainly instigated by British bureaucracy, to keep the Muslims away from the sessions of the Congress. Nevertheless, Muslim participation was not infinitesimal. While only two of them were present at Bombay, in 1885, their strength rose to 254 in 1889 and 313 at Lucknow in 1889. Their percentage was 17.7 at Allahabad in 1888 but it came down to 1.5 per cent in 1895 at Poona, though it ranged generally between 4 to 9 per cent in the first two decades. Two of them Badraduddin Tyabji and Rahmatullah M. Sayani pre-

sided at the Madras (1887) and Calcutta (1896) sessions respectively. Sir Syed Ahmad, apparently under British inspiration, ridiculed the idea of representative government in India and introduced the communal division between Hindus and Muslims as a factor militating against parliamentary government in this country. He expressed his vehement opposition to the Indianisation of higher services or even reduction in military expenditure for he was a convinced supporter of the permanence of British rule in India. He believed in Hindus and Muslims being separate nationalities whose interests were antagonistic. Adhering strongly to such convictions it was difficult to persuade him or his associates to join the Congress movement which stood for the unity of the nation and democratic government. There was however opposition voiced at the different sessions of the Congress by Muslim members. But Syed Ahmad's hold over Muslim opinion grew stronger year after year and their participation in the Congress programme lacked strength.

The Indian National Congress by its very nature could not be palatable to the British bureaucracy which governed India, and seemed to be inconvenient to the imperialists who believed in carrying the whiteman's burden and enlarging the extent of the empire and strengthening its foundations. In the first three years Dufferin was not hostile to it though he felt some misgivings about its purpose and showed some "curiosity" in its proceedings. The mildness and moderation which characterised the speeches and resolutions at the Bombay session as well as vehement expressions of loyalty to British connection did not give him cause to feel alarmed at the emergence of the political body which perhaps had his approval at its establishment. At the second session in Calcutta, the Viceroy invited some delegates to a reception at the Government House. These courtesies were repeated next year at Madras where the Governor played the host. There was no bar to the attendance of government servants. But this gesture of good-will soon changed to one of hostility. The reasons for this have been admirably summarised by Dr. Tara Chand thus: "The resolutions reiterating the demand for responsible government and the speeches criticising Government measures especially condemning the imperialist forward policy and wars, were most unpalatable to the British

rulers. What seems to have irked them even more, was the issue of pamphlets describing Indian grievances, which was obviously a part of the plan for continuous political agitation. Such a development was a precursor of widening discontent and tension, and appeared very similar to the Home Rule movement of Ireland." Soon after the Bombay session and ostensibly as a measure of propaganda, for which no regular agency had been created, in the absence of branches of the Congress in the provinces or districts, recourse was had to the issue of certain pamphlets, mainly penned by Hume, whose tone was highly critical of the prevailing system of government and its machinery. Two pamphlets by him, "The Rising Tide" and "An Old Man's Home" were taken strong objection to by the Viceroy and Hume had ultimately to recant his views. More disagreeable to the government, however, was the publication and free distribution in 1887 of thousands of copies of " 'Tamil Catechism' written in Tamil by Veer Raghava Chariar and "A conversation between Maulvi Farrukuddin and one, Ram Buksh of Kambakhtapur in Urdu in Northern India. They dealt primarily with the subject of reform of the legislative councils which were termed as "a mere sham". Also there was a direct criticism of the character of officials in India who were charged of ignorance and arrogance. Moreover the former "appealed to the masses to join the Congress, so that Indians might establish their claim to self-government". This attempt to involve the mass of the people in the nascent national movement was most odious to the authorities, both in India and England, who called them seditious and were keen to repress the movement. "In the Rising Tide" Hume had raised the bogey of insurrection as a consequence of the enveloping poverty of the masses. Dufferin drew attention of the Secretary of State to "Mr. Hume's foolish threats of insurrection, and dissemination of the libels and calumnies contained in the Tamil Catechism and similar publications." The stiffening of government attitude was the necessary sequel, because, as Dufferin pointed out to Kimberly, "an autocratic government like that of India" could not long "stand the strain implied by the importation en bloc from England or rather from Ireland, of the perfected machinery of modern democratic agitation." The similarity between Irish and Indian

movements created alarm in official mind and would account for the growing antagonism to the Congress and national movement heralded by it.

The Liberal Secretary of State, Kimberley's reaction to 1885 Congress resolutions was to make "some concessions to this native movement" but with a caution not to proceed "an inch beyond the necessity of the case". His analysis was that agitation did not create grievances but only gives "definite form and shape to the thoughts which pervade many minds". In the absence of "explosive material agitation which merely puts match to them would be powerless. His anticipation was that it would be many years before the agitation in India would become dangerous". Kimberley's extent of such concessions was to adopt some "cautious step in the direction of election of members to Legislative Councils". He was opposed to the right of interpellations being given to the councils but was prepared for voluntary explanation on any matter on which the government "wished to make a public declaration". He did not favour large scale importation of "Clever Bengalis, quite unfit to rule" into the Civil Service as also the end of the Council of India. Dufferin, in spite of the danger inherent in the introduction of a larger popular element in the councils, favoured "the experiment of liberalising, if not the Supreme, at least the subordinate Legislative Councils". He was not opposed to the moderate demands of the Congress which related, in his view "to a larger share of the loaves and fishes". The Viceroy was conscious of the "progress which an organised system of popular agitation was making from one end of the country to the other". He feared that a "more violent and less respectable party, headed as far as I can make out, by Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee" would "ape the tactics and organisation of the Irish Revolutionists". He was particularly alarmed by the inauguration of "monster meetings amongst the ryots". Dufferin in 1887 could afford to be indifferent to the political agitation then, but was afraid that ultimately it might pass into the hands of "the extreme Radical party and ignorant faddists in the British House of Commons". And his patronage of the Mohammadan isolation from the national movement, and his frank speech at St. Andrew's Day Dinner in November 1888, afford clear evi-

dence of his increasing suspicion of the intentions and purposes of the Congress. He ridiculed the demand for the expansion of the membership and powers of the Legislative Councils, by misrepresenting it as an attempt "to bring the British executive into subjection to their will" through the instrumentality of the "power of the purse". He interpreted the demand for enlisting Indians as volunteers into the militia as one of reducing the British army to half its size. And categorically stated that "the people of England will not readily be brought to the acceptance of this programme, or to allow such an assembly, or a number of such assemblies, either to interfere with its armies, or to fetter and circumscribe the liberty of action either of the provincial Government or of the Supreme Executive". As education was limited to a small proportion of the population, he emphasised that the British Government would not be ready "to allow this microscopic minority to control their administration of their majestic and multiform empire for whose safety and welfare they are responsible in the eyes of God and before the face of civilization". The educated minority whose interests the Congress represented could not claim to represent the people of India. Nonetheless Dufferin was not averse to limited progress in the constitutional sphere, but such changes would require the most anxious deliberations, as well as careful discussions in Parliament. The problems of the "complex Indian Empire" must not be tackled in "haste and precipitancy". Yet he emphasised that "growth and development are the rule of the world's history" and "English statesmanship has perpetually striven gradually to adopt our methods of government in India to the expanding intelligence and capacities of the educated classes amongst our Indian subjects", and was confident "that the legitimate and reasonable aspirations of the responsible heads of native society will in due time receive legitimate satisfaction". But he emphatically spurned that England should "abdicate her control of public affairs, or delegate to a minority or to a class the duty of providing for the welfare of the diversified communities over which she rules". Nevertheless the Viceroy was prepared to seek greater cooperation of "native intelligence and native assistance in the discharge of our duties". His proposals for reform in the legislative

councils and appointment of the Public Service Commission were intended to serve this end.

The next Viceroy Lansdowne was a Liberal and did not show any great animus to the Congress as long as its discussions were marked by moderation and expressions of loyalty to the British. The Indian Council's Act of 1892 had his countenance but he did not wish to introduce elective system in the country. In his regime government servants were debarred from taking part in the Congress and even the Princes of Indian States were directed to dissociate themselves from it. His policy was "not to show any animus against the Congress, but, so long as it acts within constitutional limits, to accept it good-humouredly as representing the views of the advanced party in Indian politic". And as the Congress was "reasonable and moderate in tone" and met under the nose of the Government of India he was prepared to tolerate it and not suppress it by "indirect methods". But the political movement in the country was fast assuming a phase which created alarm in official circles. The adoption of the resolution on Permanent Settlement was deemed dangerous by the government and the agitation against cow-killing or the Age of Consent Bill were interpreted as transforming the Congress "from a foolish debating society into a real political power backed by the most dangerous elements in Native Society". Also at that time a section was coming into prominence which held extreme views and was not content with the tone or character of the Congress. The growing importance of this group, despite the moderation of older leaders, created an atmosphere of increasing hostility to the Congress. Its delegations were not received by the Viceroys. The activities of the Congress representatives in England, particularly the views of Dadabhai Naoroji relating to poverty of Indian masses, had offended the authorities, and Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India, was jubilant that the Congress was losing influence and was no less responsible for the hostility evinced by Curzon. As the Viceroy of India, Curzon held the view that the Congress "is a movement with which neither Government nor Government servants, and if so, much less the heads of Government should feel or show any sympathy. In so far as it is innocent, it is superfluous" and in so far as it is hostile to Government or seditious,

it is a national danger. My policy ever since I came to India has been to reduce the Congress to impotence, by never taking any notice of it." It was his boast that he would hasten the end of the Congress which was then fast declining in its popularity. He said, "My own belief is that Congress is tottering to its fall, and one of my great ambitions while in India is to assist it to a peaceful demise". Thus the Government of India and the India Office in London felt uncomfortable and did not wish any popular Indian political body to affect the supremacy of British rule by striving for representative government controlling the irresponsible executive. In the last years of the nineteenth century, government did not deter from pursuing a policy of repression which led to greater vehemence in the complexion of the national movement. The conditions for a radical change in the character of the Indian National Congress were growing powerful year after year. The extremist leadership decried the Congress policy of "petitions, prayers and protests" and ridiculed its 'mendacity' for it believed that political progress does not come by begging for reforms but by rousing the people to the consciousness of their rights by constant agitation. A spirit of violence was also visible. Yet till the year 1905 liberalism was the creed of the moderate Congress leadership which believed in the sense of justice of the British people who would not fail to fulfil Indian aspiration when they grew conscious of the actions and policies of the men ruling over India. Hence there was great emphasis on agitation in England. The leaders of the time were great patriots and conducted political activities in a realistic manner undeterred by calumny or emotional idealism.

In its earlier years the Congress policies were directed and determined by a number of eminent leaders 'whose intense patriotism, spirit of sacrifice and bold enunciation of political creed remained beacon light for future generations'. The most important among them were Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Surendra Nath Banerjee, Anand Charlu, Vijairaghavachariar, Badruddin Tayabji, Madan Mohan Malviya, Anand Mohan Bose and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. They were all zealous advocates of freedom. But their ideas and ideals were conditioned by the circumstances in which India was then placed. They had genuine respect for English education, western culture

and British sense of justice and love of liberty and were greatly impressed by the parliamentary institution in England. They had great appreciation of the role of British rule in bringing political and administrative unity in India and considered it as a 'safeguard against chaos and disintegration'. Hence the goal which they placed before their countrymen was not the glamorous unattainable independence which they could not conceive as being achieved in the foreseeable future. Hence what they sought was 'good government' and a 'modified type of self-government'. Hence the creed of the Congress was defined in 1899 as promotion of the interests of the well-being of the people of the Indian Empire. Even in 1905, Gokhale from the Presidential Chair, declared that "The goal of the Congress is that India should be governed in the interest of the Indians themselves, and that, in course of time, a form of government should be attained in this country similar to that existing in the self-governing colonies of the British Empire". They believed that the infusion of Indians in the higher services would help to remove the evils of bureaucratic administration. The highest ambition then was Indian representation in legislative councils inducted through a system of elections and investing them with powers to discuss the budget and interpellate the executive. And to attain these goals they sincerely hoped for British guidance and had firm faith that when the British public was apprised of the real state of affairs in India they would do justice to the Indian people and introduce free institutions in this country. Hence loyalty to the British became a fundamental article of their creed. Surendra Nath Banerjee proclaimed: "To England we look for inspiration and guidance. To England we look for sympathy in the struggle. From England must come the crowning mandate which will enfranchise our people. England is our political guide and moral preceptor in the exalted sphere of political duty." In a speech in Oxford, he called England the mother of free nations, the home of representative institutions, and hoped that the people of India who "are children of that mother...would be admitted into the rights of British Citizens and British subjects." He was confident that an "appeal made to the British people" would meet with a "response of sympathy and a readiness to grant it."



In these early years of the Congress the object before the leaders was good government, wider employment of Indians in higher offices and establishment of representative institutions. And as these could be accomplished by the good will of the British people, loyalty to British connection was emphasised. Their attitude was not dictated by fear but was the genuine outcome of their firm faith in the values of western culture, sincere confidence in the sense of justice of the freedom loving English nation and their growing adherence to English ways of life and their language and system of education. To them democracy was an exotic plant which would take time to get acclimatised to the Indian soil, hence only slow progress towards it was advisable. To these aspirations and ideology as well as their methods of action, their weapon was that of constitutional agitation and any alternative like violent revolution or even civil disobedience involving economic or political boycott and non-payment of taxes for which there was neither adequate discipline nor training was eschewed. The absence of political consciousness among the mass of people, clinging obstinately to "old modes of thought and sentiment" averse to all change; hostility of the bulk of the Mohammedans to national aspirations, the lack of roots of the educated middle class among the large mass of people, made resort to any other form of agitation impracticable. The firm adherence of the then leadership to faith in British sense of justice and generosity made them desire permanence of British rule and not separation from it and this made it imperative for it to stick to the method of 'petitions, prayers and protests', sneeringly termed 'mendicancy' by the extremists. The purpose of agitation was twofold. At one end it sought to educate the Indian people and strengthen their will and their moral force to strive for their rights, and at the other end to appeal to the conscience of England, to the sense of their justice and liberty. At that stage of political development only this course was relevant. Their use of press and platform was well calculated to lead to political maturity. The Congress became the "symbol of new India and the luring witness of her moral personality." Thus were laid the foundations of future political development and the stage set for the next step of self-reliance.

## *Self Reliance*

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Starting with humble beginnings, the Indian National Congress had developed into the premier political institution of India by the end of century. Circumstances and the natural leanings of leadership determined its objective and strategy. They professed loyalty to the British Crown and had firm faith in the sense of justice of British people and their Parliament. This belief in the justice and liberality of the English nation would explain their moderate political aspirations and mode of constitutional agitation, the method of petitions prayers and protests to achieve the end of self-government. The Congress leaders had unbounded trust in the solemn pledges given by British rulers, and the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 was considered by them to be the "Magna Charta of our rights and liberties." Bannerjee declared 'The Proclamation the whole Proclamation and nothing but the Proclamation—is our watch—word, our battlecry and the ensign of victory. It is the gospel of our political emancipation.' Of course they were conscious of the evil of foreign rule and desired self-government as it was "the ordering of nature, the will of Divine Providence". But self-government was to be limited in its scope and within the orbit of British Empire, Bannerjee declared "It is not severance that we look forward to, but unification, permanent embodiment as an integral part of the great Empire that has given the rest of the world the models of free institutions." They believed that the interests of Great Britain and India were identical, therefore what they sought was assimilation and not separation. Hence their mode of operation

was constitutional agitation, bringing pressure upon the authorities, because attaining the goal independent of the authorities was considered absurd. Dadabhai Naroji emphasised the need for constant agitation "by petitions, demonstrations and meetings, all quite peacefully but enthusiastically conducted." The early leadership believed that all the ills of bureaucratic administration would be remedied when the conscience of the English people was touched by the knowledge of its enormities. Hence propaganda in England and constant dinning of the grievances of the people in India became the weapons adopted in the early years; for the Congress leaders believed that once the Englishmen were apprised of the real facts of the Indian government, they would introduce free institutions in this country. Also to them it appeared that once Indians were admitted to higher services where policy was initiated and representative institutions were introduced, attainment of self-government would be facilitated.

Despite the faith of the Congress leaders in the British sense of justice and liberality and the profession of loyalty to their Crown, they did not hesitate to expose the evil effects of foreign rule on the morale of the subject people and their economic condition. They attributed growing poverty of India to the imperial rule which was primarily motivated by the interests of the ruling people. The Congress also laid bare the illiberal and unsympathetic nature of bureaucratic government and brought to surface the grievances of the people or the defects of the administrative machinery. In its resolutions were emphasised economic and financial policies of the government from which flowed the poverty of the people. One constant theme of their deliberations was the need for constitutional changes, involving expansion of legislative councils, both in their numerical strength and the functions which they performed. They demanded representative institutions and wanted the councils to be composed of members elected by their countrymen. Considerable stress was laid on the system of elections and enhancement of the powers of legislatures in considering the budget and scrutinising the actions of the executive authority. In all their activities the Congress leadership remained unaffected by the swift running stream of nationalist thought which at the moment was growing

in volume as a result of the wave of social and religious reform and revolutionary spirit pervading the youth of the country. Their attempt to stem the tide earned them opprobrium and their moderation was dubbed mendicancy and cowardice. At the same time, inspite of their tone of moderation and adherence to liberal principles, they failed to evoke sympathetic response from the alien government, which was growing increasingly hostile to the Congress programme and its demands. Apparently the appointment of the Public Service Commission and the changes in the Indian Councils Act of 1892, which slightly enlarged the membership of legislative councils and the scope of their functions were the main achievements of the Congress; but in reality the gain was infinitesimal and made no alteration in the basic structure or spirit of government. The elective principle was not accepted though regulations provided for the representation of the District Boards and municipalities in the provincial councils, and election by the non-official members of provincial legislative councils of members of the Legislative Council of the Governor General. Also the budget could be discussed though not voted upon, and question might be asked but no supplementary questions were permissible. These reforms fell far short of the political demand and evoked little enthusiasm. The recommendations of the Public Service Commission also failed to meet the purpose of recruitment of Indians to the higher services, and the demand for simultaneous examinations in India and England for the Indian Civil Service was not conceded. Thus the moderate Congress could claim insignificant success in winning concessions from the rulers and that would account for growing disappointment with the methods adopted so far.

The British Government also became increasingly suspicious of the motives of the Congress and grew definitely hostile to it as it developed its strength and stature. It was the direct consequence of the new wave of imperialism which pervaded British policy and thinking. At a time when Germany, France, the United States and Russia were growing serious, competitors of British trade and industry and challenging its position in Asia and Africa, the rulers of Great Britain stuck to their imperial gains and were in no mood to relax their "control over the

resources of the Empire," which the acceptance of the Congress demand would ultimately amount to. They were not prepared to let India go the way their white colonies had gone and allow it the status of a self-governing dominion. Inevitably it led to hardening in the attitude of British administrators who became more illiberal in their attitude towards Indian political aspirations. The government policy grew increasingly repressive and every opportunity was grabbed to suppress expressions of nationalism and demands for representative institutions. The criticism of its policies by the Congress which was repeated by the press and at the numerous public meetings held all over the country caused further irritation to the government which took serious steps to counteract it. This had its reaction and greater resistance to government measures was advocated by the radical sections among the politically-minded who denounced the "cautious and moderate" policies of the early leadership. A new spirit was beginning to pervade. It was fed upon resentment of British arrogance, the worsening of the economic conditions of the masses and resentment against political wrongs." (Tarachand) The liberal leadership had prepared the ground intellectually for regaining liberty. They had exposed the evils of foreign rule and thereby provided the new or extremist leadership with a powerful magazine to wage war against alien domination. Dadabhai Naoroji's exposure of governments, economic policies with their inevitable consequence of poverty resulting from ruralisation and constant drain of wealth was echoed from every platform and 'created the atmosphere of opposition and discontent.' More forthright was Gokhale's denunciation of the British financial policies in India. In his evidence before the Royal Commission on India Expenditure (Welby Commission) he deplored the fact that the interests of the Indian taxpayers were subordinated to the interests of British commerce and of British commercial and moneyed classes. This was the inevitable consequence of irresponsibility of the government to the people whose finances it administered, and who were "bound to render services to the suzerain power, and to place all our resources, whenever required at its disposal." Thus, he added, the growth of "expenditure under autocratic management, defective constitutional control and the inherent defects of alien

domination only helped to bring about a constantly increasing exploitation of our resources," retardation of national progress and increasing burden of 'financial liabilities' "The moral evil", Gokhale told the Commission was still greater. "A kind of dwarfing or the stunting of the Indian race is going on under the present system. We must live all the days of our life in an atmosphere of inferiority, and the tallest of us must bend, in order that the exigencies of the existing system may be satisfied." Thus did the liberal leadership provide the charge-sheet against alien despotism which was utilised by the new leadership which was prepared to adopt more active methods to attain the ideal of freedom.

At the same time the contribution of the government in generating the new spirit and intensifying the feelings of revolt was of no less magnitude. Its inability to accept the moderate demand of enlarging the membership and functions of the legislative councils so as to exercise some control over the executive or of larger participation of Indians in the higher rungs of administrative machinery, created serious disappointment among the elite. Increasing incidence of land revenue, and destruction of indigenous industry enhanced poverty of the agriculturist and led to recurrent famines taking a heavy toll of human lives every time. Its fiscal policy produced resentment and the compensatory excise duty on Indian manufacture of cloth was provocative. There was no slackening in the burden of military expenditure which mounted enormously owing to the adoption of a forward foreign and frontier policy. Indian troops were utilised for imperial purposes. Most poignantly Curzon unfolded the role India had played in sharing the imperial burdens,. He told a London audience. "If you want to save your colony of Natal from being over-run by a formidable enemy you ask India for help, and she gives it; if you want to rescue the white man's legations from massacre at Peking, and the need is urgent, you ask the Government of India to despatch an expedition, and they despatch it.....if you desire to defend any of your extreme outposts or coaling stations of the Empire in Mauritius, Singapur, Hongkong, even Tien-tsin or Shan-hai-kwan, it is to the Indian army that you turn..." And the expenditure on all such expeditions was met from the Indian exchequer. The Congress demand

for non-employment of Indian troops for imperial purposes was treated with scant attention. The prayer for universal primary education was disdainfully neglected and India had the highest rate of illiteracy in the world. Increasing poverty, economic ruin and ignorance were the consequences of British rule, and this fact was utilised by the extremist leadership to rouse popular resentment.

The repressive policy adopted by the government to scuttle the rising national movement heightened the feelings of resentment among the educated youth against illiberal administration carried on in the interests of an alien people. Apart from early endeavours, beginning with 1888, to ridicule the Congress, obstruct its functioning and express displeasure at its activities, the government issued instructions to the government servants to keep away from the Congress. The story of the efforts of the local government to prevent the Congress session being held at Allahabad and the manner in which it was frustrated is well known. Police detectives were sent to Indian National Congress sessions and loyal elements were mobilised to promote anti-Congress meetings. Then followed the persecution of the press which began about 1893 and continued unabated for nearly twenty years. The trial of Tilak for his writings in Kesari, which coincided with the murder of Rand and Ayrst, and interpreted as incitement to murder by the government and his imprisonment were a naked demonstration of bureaucratic efforts to penalise freedom of expression. The enactment of the Official Secrets Act and Section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code to punish sedition by Curzon, soon after his assuming the office of Governor-General was a further evidence of the new spirit of repression which gripped the Government of India then. The new Viceroy also took steps to deprive the educated middle class of the power to control local bodies. His amendment of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation Act reduced the strength of the Corporation by cutting out 25 elective members, and made it essentially an official dominated body. Thus was partially undone the work of local self-government initiated by Ripon. This measure evoked considerable opposition by the Indian Press and occasioned resignation by a large number of Indian members of the Corporation. Another of his repressive measures was the enactment of the Official Secrets Act aimed at

restricting the liberty of the press. Curzon was unhappy at the expansion of higher education to which he attributed the growth of national sentiment. His Universities Act provided for greater official hold by limiting the strength of the Senates of the Universities and introducing a large element of officials and Englishmen in them. All these measures excited alarm in the Indian mind and provoked the sentiment of opposition in the country.

Curzon did not stop merely at restricting the opportunities for the Indians to manage some of their affairs or indulging in criticism of the governmental measures. He employed his polemical abilities and bitter tongue to drive home the inferiority of Indian people and prove their incapacity for working democratic institutions or conducting their government. In his convocation address at the Calcutta University, the Viceroy told the graduates that the "the highest ideal of truth is to a large extent a Western Conception" and that in India truth as an ideal had been "attended with some qualification, and very often praise is given to successful deception practised with honest aim." This wholesale denunciation of Indian character and calling the Indian people a nation of liars added insult to injury and heightened sense of resentment among the educated community. In another speech he disillusioned the educated classes regarding their constant reference to the Proclamation of 1858. He said "You base your claim for equality on the Queen's Proclamation. But what does it promise you ? It says that you will have equality when you are qualified for it. Now, here we have certain qualifications which can only be obtained by heredity or race. Therefore, as you cannot acquire race you really cannot have equality with Englishmen in India as long as British rule lasts." It was a great blow to the hopes and aspirations of the elite and almost affirmed the principle of permanence of British rule in India. Naturally these words caused resentment and even Gokhale, with all his moderation and admiration for British sense of justice, failed to suppress his disappointment. He told an English audience, "Now apart from the question of your national honour being involved in this—the explaining away of a sovereign's word—look at the unwisdom, the stupendous unwisdom of the whole thing—telling the people of India that unless they were content to



remain permanently a subject race in their own country, their interest and those of British rule were not identical. After this, how can any Englishman complain if my countrymen regarded, as they have been latterly regarding, your rule in India as maintained not to promote their interests but for a selfish purpose?" The Indian Press had bitter comments on it and Amrit Bazar Patrika asked whether the Queen had cheated the Indian people when she enunciated those sublime principles of British rule. Curzon denied that India was a nation. In his speech in 1906 he was brutally frank when he said, "they are not one community, one language, one race or one religion; they are a continent, an empire, almost a universe apart." He denied the claim of the Congress to represent the people who, he asserted, "are the voiceless millions who can neither read nor write their own tongues. The people of India are the peasants, whose life is not one of political aspiration, but of mute penury and trial. The plans and policy of the Congress party in India would leave the amorphous residuum absolutely untouched." His greatest ambition was to hasten the extinction of the Congress and Hamilton gave him a pat on the back for it.

Curzon also blasted the Indian demand for admission to higher services. In his budget speech of 1904, he declared, "the highest ranking of civil employment in India...must as a general rule be held by Englishmen, for the reason that they possess partly by heredity, partly by upbringing, partly by education, the knowledge of the principles of government, the habits of mind, the vigour of character, which are essential for the task." He sincerely believed that India's main role was to subserve the interests of the British Empire. And for this purpose he would provide efficient administration, "justice between man and man, equality before law and freedom from tyranny and oppression." He wanted to ameliorate the lot of the masses, and allowing "the middle classes to take over the minor chores of Government for which as a race, they are fitted." But he was opposed to the participation of people in the government for "liberty, equality and fraternity were definitely not for the Indians." He believed that Indians, prosperity was possible only under the aegis of the British Government. He reiterated this sentiment in his Delhi Durbar speech in 1903 when he stated, "But under no other

condition can this future be realised than the unchallenged supremacy of the Paramount Power and under no other controlling authority is this capable of being maintained than that of the British Crown." These ebullitions of the Viceroy, deprecating Indian character and demoting the people in their own eyes, provoked national resentment and demand for self-rule became more vocal.

While the evils of foreign government were exposed by liberal leaders arousing sentiments of disaffection and while the repressive measures adopted by the Government of India caused intense resentment, it was the emotional ferment and consciousness of the past heritage which intensified national sentiment and provided stimulus to the rise of extremist thought. The "preachings of Swami Dayanand, Swami Vivekanand and a large number of Hindu reformers, poets, writers and indologists formed the emotional basis of a more energetic nationalism. The people had now a consciousness of their greatness in the preceding ages and a sense of cultural superiority over the rulers, who were depicted as mere barbarians when the Indians had developed an advanced civilisation. Dayanand's exposition of the highest spiritual truths contained in the Vedas, and Vivekanand's revelation of the supreme knowledge of the ancient Hindus and magnitudinous spiritual and ethical values which it contained, gave the Indians a sense of mission, a consciousness of leadership in the world, distraught by factious wars and suffering from moral bankruptcy." Dayanand employed the word Swaraj to indicate the ideal towards which the Indian people should strive, for only under that political status full assertion of human personality was achievable. He advocated far-reaching social reforms to purge the Indian society of the evils which had crept into it during the intervening centuries. For only a chastened community, endowed with knowledge and energised by highest morality was fit for self-rule, freed from religious dominance and political slavery. He championed the cause of Swadeshi and cautioned against adoption of alien cultural and social standards. The Arya Samaj became the instrument of preaching this indigenous nationalism and worked energetically to raise the people from the slough of degeneration and despondency. More remarkable, however, was the contribution of Swami Vivekanand

who proclaimed the spiritual greatness of India in western countries. Beginning with his appearance at the Conference of Religions in Chicago, his chief interest in life was to deliver to the world the message of Indian culture and civilisation. Reviving the glory of India and thereby strengthening the self-confidence of Indians were the necessary corollaries of his mission" (Majumdar). He believed that India has a mission—a message for the humanity as a whole. For the realisation of this aim, freedom of the Indian people was essential. He invoked the image of Mother India which alone was to be worshipped. He said, "Let all other gods disappear from our minds. This is the only god that is awake, our own race—everywhere his hands, everywhere his feet, everywhere his ears, he covers everything." Thus was patriotism raised into a religious duty and the worship of the motherland the highest virtue.

The writings of Bankim Chandra Chatterji, particularly his *Anand Math* inspired the people to a sense of patriotism, self-sacrifice and self-discipline. The *Bande Mataram* song became later the battlecry of the young patriots seeking to free their motherland from foreign domination in all spheres, political, economic and cultural. Aurobindo Ghosh credits him with the mission of infusing religious feelings into patriotic work. He became the prophet of the religion of patriotism. Bankim's main contribution was to make the vision of mother-land, our mother, a reality. Aurobindo said, "The bare intellectual idea of the motherland is not in itself a great driving force; the mere recognition of the desirability of freedom is not an inspiring motive. It is not till the motherland reveals herself to the eye of the mind as something more than the stretch of earth or a mass of individuals, it is not till she takes shape as a great Divine and Material Power in a form of beauty that can dominate the mind and seize the heart that these petty fears and hopes vanish in all absorbing passion for the mother and her service, and the patriotism that work miracles and saves a doomed nation is born" The idolisation of the motherland and giving it a personality, something concrete appealing to the emotions, a deity whose service demanded the highest sacrifice caught the imagination of youth and inspired them to lay their lives in the service of the motherland, the Divine Mother. The conception of motherland

which is greater than heaven, became the theme of poetry and fiction and generated the will to suffer for her freedom from the shackles which bound her. Patriotism was transformed into a religion which gripped imagination and ceased to be something intellectual, depending on reasoning and logic, but was a thing of emotion. Literature in Indian languages was suffused with this sentiment and had a mass appeal. In Maharashtra, at the same time, Tilak also used the Ganpati and Shivaji festivals to lend garb of religion to politics, and thereby made it broad-based, something which the general people could understand and be infused with. Throughout the country the youth was inspired with the ideal of service and sacrifice at the altar of the mother-land. Their faith in the glorious future of the mother land, devotion to her glory and intense passion for her freedom gave a new turn to the struggle for freedom and contributed in a large measure to the eclipse of the Congress at the moment and opposition to its limited aims and modes of operation.

Another factor leading to the intensification of national sentiment and struggle for freedom was the increasing poverty of the masses and the steady decline in economic conditions. The last quarter of the nineteenth century was a period of recurring famines. Every ten years saw a major famine causing millions of deaths, and every fifth year was one of scarcity and drought. Of course there was no control over the forces of nature, but what made the tragedy acute was the lack of sustaining power, the means to survive when rains failed and agriculture suffered even in one season. This condition was attributed by Indian economists, politicians and nationalists to the financial and economic policies of the government. High land-rent, drain of wealth from the country as tribute to the Supreme Power, the selfish fiscal policy, detrimental to the interests of Indian industry and trade and increasing civil and military expenditure of the state were believed, and rightly too, to be the cause of intense poverty of the people and growing inability to sustain natural calamities. The interests of Manchester, Lancashire and Birmingham which were served by the fiscal policies of the Government of India killed indigenous industries which failed to compete on equal terms with the mechanised produce of English factories. This contributed to ruralisation and dependence on agriculture

which could not provide employment for the growing population and absorb the artisans and craftsmen, particularly weavers, who had been deprived of their means of sustenance by the onslaught of subsidised imports promoted by state policy. In the absence of any other source, the incidence of growing taxation fell on land which was scarcely in a position to support it, specially so when the government was callous to its needs and failed to provide either adequate irrigation facilities or scientific aids and methods to increase agricultural production. Till the year 1914, while the old domestic industry had been crushed, the modern industry, which was essentially in textiles, failed to attain maturity largely because of governmental measures and the prevailing fiscal policy which was oriented in the interests of British industry. Thus there was lack of alternative employment and the country became poorer, scarcely able to support the steadily rising expenditure of the government and consequent increase in taxation. The old leadership of the Congress had by a clear analysis of its causes, exposed the failings of the foreign government which was held solely responsible for the misery of the people. The theory of drain wealth of so adroitly adumbrated by Dadabhai Naoroji and propagated by Wacha and the economists, provided a powerful weapon to the nationalists to arouse resentment and popular discontentment against the alien government. The Congress policies and programmes failed to bring relief to the people who were no longer satisfied with empty resolutions and fruitless petitions and prayers. Curzon's advocacy of the land-revenue policy of the government did not convince even the moderates and gave a handle to the nationalists to denounce it. The failure of the Congress to influence the authorities in India or England to orient their economic policies to the interests of the governed contributed in a large measure to discredit its leadership and create prejudice against its mode of operation, which was called mendicancy and believed to be ineffective.

Even a casual reference to the discussions at the annual meetings of the Congress will show the rising feeling of disappointment with the government which was ultimately to lead to the discredit of the Congress and growth of the new spirit of self-reliance. As early as 1892, Gokhale, the apostle of libera-

lism and moderation, pointed to the increasing "disposition" in the government "to regret the promises given us in the past;" and taunted the authorities, "to openly and publicly fling into the flames all these promises and pledges as so much waste paper and tell us once for all that, after all, we are a conquered people and can have no rights and privileges. That the government has, of late, been pursuing a policy of retrogression is clear to everyone." Next year on the subject of permanent settlement Tilak and others pointed out the impoverishment of the peasant and the hardships to which he was subject. One speaker even warned that such conditions would afford "materials for revolutionary plots," for people who are starving and in despair lend a ready ear to suggestions of revolt. The grant of exchange compensation allowance to the higher services rightly merited Surendranath Bannerji's irate denunciation of the government when he charged it, "with trifling with the interest of the people and having been guilty of injustice to the interests committed to its care. For additional expenditure would lead to additional taxation with the result that the people would be stinted of their food, of their rice and of their salt in order that the highly paid officials of the government may be provided with their usual brandy, beef and champaign." Another year Gokhale warned that "if these pledges are repudiated, one of the strongest claims of British rule to our attachment will disappear." The last few years of the nineteenth century witnessed recurrence of famines, the fury of the plague and the misery of the indentured labour in the tea gardens of Assam and the British Colonies. Worst was the unequal treatment to which the Indians were subjected in South Africa. Their plight was highlighted by the passive resistance organised by Mahatma Gandhi there. For many years in succession the Congress adopted resolutions condemning that treatment and uncovering the inferior position which Indians occupied as against the Whites in British imperial possessions. More than any other matter the South African question generated strong feelings against the rulers. In 1896-97 the relief measures organised by the Bombay provincial authorities to check the plague, called for vigorous protest and engendered resentment verging on revolt. The complaints submitted by Natu, a Poona Sardar, appealing

to the government to interfere ended only in his arrest and detention in jail without trial, the prosecution of Tilak for his writings in the *Kesari*, and trial of the editors of two Indian language papers. This repression in place of sympathy for the sufferers created greater resentment all over the country. The Congress President that year frankly told that to try to "stop progress may compel underground passages or its over-flow." Referring to the moral and material decline of the Indian nation, he said the remedy was only "zealous efforts of the educated and enlightened men." Annie Besant is right in attributing the "birth of the Extremist party" to the "plague outrages in Poona", where Rand and Ayerst were murdered and the unjust imprisonment of Tilak and Natu for the "crime of drawing the attention of the government to bureaucratic enormities." Surendranath Bannerji called quartering of the punitive police in Poona as a mistake, and the imprisonment of Tilak and the editors as "a still greater mistake," and in that context asserted the rights and privileges enjoyed by the British subjects. In his usual eloquence he asked "who will filch away these rights from us? We are resolved, and the Congress will take this pledge, you and I will enter into a solemn League of Covenant, let it go forth from this hall, let it impregnate the public mind of India, we are resolved,.....to assert under the Providence of God our rights as British subjects, not the least important of which is the inestimable right of personal liberty."

There was frank denunciation of the reactionary policy of the government which was a normal feature of British administration at the close of the century. The Sedition Law of 1898, the Official Secrets Act and the amendment to the Municipal Acts of Calcutta and Bombay were severely criticised as evidence of the wave of reaction which had seized the bureaucracy. The heavy incidence of land-revenue was held responsible for the increasing poverty of the peasants. In this context Tilak said in 1900, "if you took away the produce of the land and did not give it back to the land in some form more material than prestige and advice, the country must grow poorer and poorer." Dinshaw Wacha in his Presidential address laid great stress on the drain of wealth from India, and said that "so long as absen-

teeism, which is the principal feature of British rule exists," the "extraction of crores of rupees from the country without any hope of return" would continue to obstruct prosperity. He charged the government of pursuing the "mischievous policy of retrogression and repression." With the Congress of 1903 commences a hardening of sentiments against the prevailing system of bureaucratic rule. Bannerji in 1902, while ridiculing the "hesitating, doubting, calculating, casting up the moral results" attitude of the Indians, had warned them that "such has not been the royal road to political enfranchisement." He held up the ideal of Japan before them and prophesied that "the period of reconstruction has now arrived." But the veteran politician Lal Mohan Ghosh questioned the benignant character of British rule. He said "may we not respectfully ask our rulers...whether we are to believe that the policy which many years ago killed our indigenous industries, which even only the other day and under a liberal administration unblushingly imposed excise duties on our cotton manufactures, which steadily drains our national resources...and which by imposing heavy burdens on our agricultural population increases the frequency and intensity of our famines to an extent unknown in former times—are we to believe that the various administrative acts which have led to those results were duly inspired by beneficent Providence?" He attributed the wrongs to the fact that "we are not a self-governing Nation," and rightly remarked that the "bureaucracy, instead of coming into line with popular ideas, seems to grow more and more unsympathetic." The very basis of moderate thinking that British rule had saved the country from anarchy was doubted by the President for "after all it makes but little difference whether millions of lives are lost on account of war and anarchy, or whether the same result is brought about by famine and starvation." This was the strongest condemnation of foreign rule, and Annie Besant attributed change in the temper of the country to Curzon's rule. She pointed to the "increasing signs of the coming danger... Coercion created unrest; a feeling of general insecurity arose, owing to the odious system of the letters de cachet, under which no man's liberty was safe; men began to despair of improvement and secret societies were formed. The voice of Congress



was disregarded and its leaders lived under the shadow of arrest. Each year showed growing anger and increasing resentment against Curzonian rule." A change was in the air and the failure of the Congress to halt the pace of reaction and protect the people from misery and humiliation created the atmosphere for the emergence of extremism in politics, the rise of New Thought.

The natural tendency of foreign rule to resort to reaction and repression, rather than sympathy with the aspirations of the ruled, led to the hardening of feelings and the demand for self-rule became increasingly vocal. Also there was the development of the spirit of self-reliance which was emphasised by the new leadership which emerged in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Another factor which contributed to the intensification of the spirit of nationalism was the international situation at the beginning of the present century which helped demolition of belief in the invincibility and superiority of the West. All over Asia a new consciousness of the greatness of its past was growing, and that led to the conviction in the capacity to regain that position in the future. Events like the emergence of Japan as a great nation, strong both industrially and militarily, competing with European powers on terms of equality, inspired other nations to dream of a glorious future. Japan's victory over the mighty Russian empire further enhanced its prestige in the eyes of the Asain people and convinced the nationalists in India and other lands of their ability to wrest independence from western domination. Elsewhere in Asia also there were rumblings of reform and revolution. In the decadent empires of China, Turkey and Persia there were evident signs of a move in the direction of democracy. Revolution for popular rights was witnessed in Persia and Russia. The demand for Home Rule was intensified in Ireland and the British Colonies were asserting their autonomy. The Boer War had shaken the confidence of England in its strength and the revolt was viewed with sympathy by popular elements elsewhere. The repulse of Italian arms in Abyssinia was another reminder to the people of the East that the West was not invincible. The effect of all these developments was to generate confidence among the nationalists in India of the ultimate success of their cause and to make them

bold to challenge the power of foreign rulers. The new spiritual awakening, the fast declining material prosperity and decaying economic condition of the people, the consciousness of the true character of selfish imperialism, the conviction that the British rule would not relinquish power except under strong pressure, the utter futility of the mendicant methods adopted by the moderate Congress leadership to secure constitutional or administrative reforms and the wave of revolution in eastern Europe and Asia, all these prepared the soil for the rise of extremist nationalism and emergence of revolutionary party. Curzon's partition of Bengal brought these elements to the surface and heralded the advent of radical change in the character of national movement.

The new leadership had immense faith in the traditional values and to that extent was poles apart from the old moderate leaders who were steeped in western civilisation and having faith in western values, largely influenced by their admiration for the immense strides made by western nations in the path of material development and democratic institutions, and desired a complete change in old institutions and mode of living. The new leaders were ardent supporters of Indian civilisation, its philosophy, its religion and culture. They believed that India had a divine mission to fulfill, and thus patriotism was a religion to them. Action was their guiding principle and unity of India bound by common ideal and sense of duty was their creed. The new or Extremist party had for its goal Swaraj or absolute independence and their method of action was passive resistance. Four prominent leaders of this group, Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh, defined the creed of the new party and conducted its operations. Before we proceed with the narrative of events from the Partition of Bengal to the Jalianwala massacre it will be pertinent to examine the ideas, aspirations and mode of action pursued by these four eminent leaders. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was a "realist, practical minded in his views and willing to compromise." He had, early in his youth, decided to dedicate his life to the service of the motherland and the cause of its independence. In his analysis of the problems facing the Indian people, he was convinced that the remedy for all the ills was "freedom, power to regulate and

administer the country's affairs, Swaraj, that is, India for Indians." To achieve this end it was necessary to remove two obstacles; one the armed might of the ruling power and two the "inferiority complex of the educated class." He desired to use the immense mass power and bring them into the arena of politics to neutralise the military potential of the British Empire. To change the outlook of the elite. Tilak sought to inspire in them faith in the country's present capability and future destiny, and rouse in them love for their culture and past heritage. He was fully conscious of the futility of armed revolt which would be infructuous against the British naval and military strength. Hence a peaceful and non-violent struggle alone was the alternative. If the "overwhelming numbers of the population" might be organised and mobilised to offer even passive resistance they would paralyse the government. He employed Ganpati festival and celebration of Shivaji's exploits to rouse the masses of Maharashtra into action. He did not countenance the programme of social reform which would estrange the people and weaken the main struggle for freedom which was pre-eminently political. He advocated adoption of a programme of action by the Congress which would "evoke mass support". Its basic principle was "self reliance and sacrifice." Resistance on a large scale was to be organised of which the four pillars were "national education, swadeshi, boycott and Swaraj." Its purpose was to withdraw "support from Government in the sphere of culture, economy, justice and administration." Tilak was no visionary but as a realist, he realised the importance of gradualness and did not advocate immediate "total withdrawal of the British" but was prepared for "a gradual transference of power." Hence he stood for Dominion Status within the British Empire, claiming equality of status with United Kingdom and the Dominions. As reported by Nevinson, he did not wish to abolish "British rule at once and completely," to shake off British suzerainty. He said, "our object is to obtain eventually a large share in the administration of our country. Our remote idea is a confederacy of Indian provinces possessing colonial self-government, with all imperial questions set apart for Central Government in England." This ideal did not differ from that of the moderates, though there was considerable difference in

the mode of attaining the object. He had no faith in the confidence cherished by the Moderates of influencing "public opinion in England by sending deputations" and harping on the "justice of our case." His motto, he said, "is self-reliance not mendicancy."

Tilak believed "that the only enduring basis for national unity and national self-respect must be national self-rule." His concept of freedom was to "have in our hands the right of carrying on our affairs." For this purpose he sought Swaraj which was distinguished from colonial self-government, the then objective of the moderate leadership. It was interpreted as "freedom from foreign control, independence to manage our affairs without any external restraint." It would be "people's rule" instead of that of bureaucracy. His "Swaraj was the foundation of moral purposefulness of life," the basis of Swadharma. Progress depended on Swaraj. He would often say, "if we do not get Swaraj, there will be no industrial progress, if we do not get Swaraj, there will be no possibility of having any kind of education useful to the nation." He was not interested in getting higher posts or reform in British administration. What he sought was an absolute change in the system, the overthrow of British connection ultimately. He wanted "a complete change in the theory of the Government of India as now put forward by the bureaucracy." To Tilak Swaraj was "the fulfilment of our national life. That is what we seek that is why God has sent us into the world to fulfill him." He proclaimed "Swaraj is my birth right." He elaborated the principle and mode of action of the Extremist party in a speech in Calcutta on 2 January 1902. Acknowledging the valuable services rendered to the nation by the earlier leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji, W.C. Bonnerji, Henry Cotton and others, adopting the mode of constitutional agitation, he affirmed that times have changed and their methods have grown futile and antiquated. He said that the new leadership had faith in self-reliance and would win Swaraj by the adoption of Swadeshi, boycott and national education. "Self-sacrifice is our effective weapon and our strength is the strength of the people." He had no use for weapons of violence for boycott was that powerful instrument which would compel the rulers to yield power. He stated

that the British administration depended on people's cooperation for its success, and if that cooperation were withdrawn it would be difficult for the British to carry on government here. He declared that the Extremist party did not believe in the benevolence of government for its misprision of action was self-interest, and reaffirmed faith in the efficacy of boycott through which alone control over administrative machinery would be obtained. He said, "the point is to have the entire control in our hands. I wish to have the key of my own house and not merely one stranger turned out of it. Self-Government is our goal." To achieve it he advocated the use of moral weapons of self-sacrifice and self-discipline. In practice, boycott would imply withdrawal of cooperation from the foreign government in collecting revenues and working the administrative machine. He would withdraw cooperation from the law courts and establish indigenous agencies for adjudication of disputes. Withdrawal from the army and refusal to fight for the empire would be other steps, the final being refusal to pay revenues. He was prepared to accept constitutional reforms but carry on the struggle till self-government was attained. His object was "to make government under the present conditions impossible by a peaceful but firm passive resistance." Tilak believed in action and intimate contact with the people. When Maharashtra was facing a bitter famine, he advised the peasants not to pay revenue if they were unable to do so, and organised relief. Similarly when plague epidemic was raging in Poona, he did not hesitate to render help to the people, unmindful of his own peril. Self-reliance and action were the two watch-words and these were the principles which the new party adopted.

The philosophy of extremist or new nationalism was, however, elaborated by Aurobindo Ghosh whose impact was felt when he returned to Bengal from Baroda and hurled himself into the anti-partition agitation. To him nationalism was a religion, the deity to be worshipped was the mother-land, whose freedom was the goal to be pursued. Even as early as 1893 he had questioned the utility of the Congress method of petitioning and prayers. To him the Congress was an "unnational body divorced from the realities of Indian life, its instinct." He wrote, "I say of the Congress, then, this—that its aims are mistaken, that the spirit

in which it proceeds towards their accomplishment is not a spirit of sincerity and whole-heartedness, and that the methods it has chosen are not the right methods, and the leaders in whom it trusts, not the right sort of men to be leaders;—in brief, that we are at present the blind led, if not by the blind at any rate by the one-eyed ” But he contained his resentment of the prevailing Congress policies and it was only in 1907, when opposition to the partition of Bengal was in full swing that he elaborated the principle of passive or defensive resistance and popularised the concept of independence or *Purna Swaraj*. He wrote, “the first principle of passive resistance, which the new school have placed in the forefront of their programme, is to make administration under present conditions impossible by an organised refusal to do anything which shall help either British commerce in the exploitation of the country or British officialdom in the administration of it—unless and until the conditions are changed in the manner and to the extent demanded by the people. This attitude is summed up in one word, Boycott, which also goes by the name of Passive Resistance.” What he advocated was “to establish a popular authority which will exist side by side with a despotic foreign bureaucracy,” which had fixed its octopus-like hold. “The popular authority will have to dispute every part of our national life and activity one by one, step by step, with the intruding force to the extreme point of entire emancipation from alien control. This and no less than this is the task before us.” It implied complete independence from foreign rule for which purpose “a total war against dominating forces” would have to be waged, the methods of which would depend on the circumstances. Violence or armed resistance might be justified in certain circumstances, in others passive resistance would be the most effective weapon. Aurobindo Ghosh was not averse to the functioning of “secret warlike activity” along with “public agitation, demonstration, and boycott.”

Aurobindo placed before the country very clear view of the goal to which the people should aspire. It was “unqualified Swaraj” or self-government for India, for without the impetus of liberty she cannot pursue a course of unchecked progress and realise her highest national destiny.” (Haridas & Uma Mukherjee) But this Swaraj was not merely political freedom rather was to be

“the fulfilment of ancient life of India under modern conditions, the return of the satyayuga of national greatness, the resumption by her of her great role of teacher and guide, which would demand living her own life and not the life of a part or subordinate in a foreign Empire.” The Swaraj was necessary “so that the present unhealthy conditions of political life, full of the germs of the social and political pthisis which is overtaking Europe, may be entirely and radically cured.” His Swaraj was to be “a Swadeshi Swaraj and not an importation of the European article,” for “the world needs India and needs her free.” In his editorial in the *Bande Mataram*, he stressed this aspect in the words “that India has a right to live in history as a separate nation with destiny and mission all her own; further that that mission and that destiny could never conceivably form part of the destiny and mission of a foreign people exercising political and economic predominance over her.” Thus there was no room for overlordship in any shape or form, political, industrial, intellectual, social or religious “as that would be fatal to the continuance and growth of self-conscious life.” The New Thought or the new party proclaimed its creed as that of working for “an independent destiny for India and not being dragged at the chariot-wheels of a superior power which shall dictate terms and conditions upon which she should be permitted to grow.” Its cry was India for Indians, to which purpose “the Swadeshi Movement, the Boycott Movement (both in its industrial and political aspects), and the new Educational Movement”, were to be adopted. Further elaborating the character of the new movement, he wrote “it is a protest against the continuance of British control.” It was not a negative concept generated by anti-British sentiments, but a positive programme directed towards the making of modern India a “great, free and united nation.” Aurobindo Ghosh called it a programme of Democratic Nationalism, and wrote that the “Nationalist would be satisfied with nothing less than independence whether within the Empire, if that be possible, or outside it.” The New Party thus believed that “Indians are capable of freedom” and “that the fatal hour for Indian unification and freedom has arrived. In brief they are convinced that India should strive to be free, that she can be free and that she will, by the impulse of her past and

present, be inevitably driven to the attempt and the attainment of national self-realization." It was a spirited vindication of the creed of the new Nationalist party. The goal and the means of attaining it were radically different from those of the old leadership which was called Moderate party. Aurobindo in a derisive tone denounced the methods of the other group. He wrote, "from any idea of open struggle with the bureaucracy they shrank with terror and sense of paralysis. Dominated by the idea of the overwhelming might of Britain and the abject weakness of India, their want of courage and faith in the nation, their rooted distrust of the national character, disbelief in Indian patriotism and blindness to the possibility of true political strength and virtue in the people precluded them from discovering the rough and narrow way to salvation. Herein lies the superiority of the new school that they have an indomitable courage and faith in the nation and its people." It was an uncharitable characterisation of the old leadership which was not devoid of the feelings of patriotism, though conscious of the reality of the situation and having implicit faith in the method of constitutional agitation, they were reluctant to adopt radical methods of political action. In this difference of approach to the political problem lay the germs of cleavage between the two parties and division of the Congress, which came about in Surat.

The trio of Lal-Bal-Pal provided leadership to the nationalists and regulated their activities in the critical period of partition agitation. Bipin Chandra Pal came to the Congress platform in 1886 and till 1897 did not evince any opposition to its policies and programme. It was mainly in connection with the partition of Bengal that he disclosed his adherence to the new philosophy of boycott and propagated it widely. He gave a spiritual turn to the movement in which he was largely interpreting the ideas of Swami Vivekanand. Pal indicated the differences "between the older political agitations and the New Nationalist Movement" as "(1) its intensely spiritual and religious character as compared to the absolutely secular spirit of the former and (2) its strong grip of the actualities of Indian life and thought against the imitative character of the older and earlier social and political activities." Bipin Chandra Pal however, relinquished his grip on the movement when the government interned Lala Lajpat Rai



and deputed Tilak to Mandalay jail. But his contribution in intensifying the campaign for Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education, which were the main items of Passive Resistance was immense. The third number of the trio was Lala Lajpat Rai, the Punjab leader. Majumdar depicts him as "the earliest exponent of militant nationalism in the country," and as "the first spokesman of the doctrine of Passive Resistance." Lajpat Rai came into prominence by his open Letters to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and his active part in pressing the claims of Indians to higher appointments. He was warmly welcomed at the Allahabad Congress where he supported the main resolution on the expansion of Legislative Councils. But his interest in the Congress work flagged after its fifth session and he devoted the next fourteen years to the work of the Arya Samaj. As he has hinted in his 'Autobiographical Writings,' he felt then that the "Congress leaders care more for fame and pomp than for the interests of the country." His indifference to the Congress was his "dislike for holiday aspect of its annual meetings" and its leaders whom he termed "holiday patriots". He had no charm for the Congress programme of constitutional reform for he cherished a strong love for liberty and believed that its work would not affect any change in the "ignorance and poverty of the Indian masses". His work in this period related to famine relief and promotion of industry in Panjab.

He turned to political activity at the end of the century, and called upon the Congress "to shed off its festive character" and rise above "plausibly worded platitudes and well-disguised common places." He did not believe that the basic problems of Indian life could be solved by resolutions and speeches but called for immense sacrifice in the cause of the country, and "put our united shoulders to the wheel, to drag the car of progress to its destination cost what it may." To him the essential need was "to educate the people so as to befit them for the performance of those duties a proper discharge of which alone can secure for them their position in the commonwealth." Like Tilak he tried to raise political work from the level of the educated middle class to that of the people, the vast masses, where alone the driving power for winning liberty was available. He had no horror for the word revolution and chided the

Congress for not producing even in twenty one years 'a number of political Sanyasis that could sacrifice their lives for the political regeneration of the country.' He had little faith in the Congress method of appealing to the benevolence of the English people, and questioned the very basis of constitutional agitation, both in India and England. On his return from his mission to England, he expressed his disbelief in the benevolent intentions of the British electors for in matters political "philanthropy and ethical justice" had no place and therefore it was futile to expect the Parliament or the government in England to redress Indian grievances. He wrote "you can at times successfully appeal to the humanity and benevolence of individuals but to hope for justice and benevolence from a nation is hoping against hope. The rule of a foreign democracy is in this respect, the most dangerous." Hence he wanted change in the method of Congress agitation and was greatly impressed by mass demonstrations witnessed in London. He was keen to associate the people with the political work which the then Congress shrank from.

Lajpat Rai, like Tilak and Pal, adopted Swaraj, Swadeshi and Boycott as weapons for winning freedom. He favoured resort to Passive Resistance as a method of political action and gave his support to the anti-partition movement in Bengal which had a mass appeal and rested on self-help and self-reliance. To him repression and regression in the policy of the government were welcome as they opened the eyes of the Indians and convinced them of "the absolute necessity of unity of classes for the commonweal." He thanked Curzon who by his attack on national character and his anti-popular measures had led to the "moral conviction that our salvation must after all come from within." Just before the Banaras Congress in 1905, he contrasted English methods of agitation for winning political liberty with those adopted till then by the Indians and deplored "the apathy, the indifference, the want of earnestness, the absence of a spirit of sacrifice for the cause and for the principle, the colossal timidity and the consequent failure of those who carry on political agitation in India." He called on the "best sons" of the motherland to "consecrate their lives to the work of organising political movements in India." He demanded adop-

tion of "more vigorous measures and substantial change in the methods of our agitation." He advocated "popular demonstration" at the Congress sessions and adoption of the resolutions on Swadeshi, Swaraj and Boycott by the whole country simultaneously. In a paper published early in 1907, Lajpat Rai expressed his views about the nature of political work and national outlook which should be the basis of agitation for liberty. He wrote that the word Swaraj "sums up all our political aspirations" and exhorted the people to adopt it as "our war—cry, our all-absorbing and all-inspiring aim in life," to the attainment of which self should be forgotten. He invoked the words of Mazzini to awaken Indians to a sense of their duty, and to convince them "that their sole path to reality is through sacrifice. The work before us is not only an endeavour to create a united nation but to make her great and powerful—worthy of her past glories and conscious of her future mission." For this purpose his prescription was "to raise our patriotism to the level of religion and to aspire to live or to die for it." He stressed the need of a number of whole-time workers devoted to the work of giving political education and imparting right ideas. Agitation for the sake of agitation must be the motto and Swadeshi and Boycott must be taken seriously. By these means alone he visualised bright future for the country. Unlike the moderate leaders he had no horror for revolution and is known to have been associated with some of the leaders of the militant group of nationalists.

It will be clear from this review of the ideas of new leadership that the differences with the old moderate leadership of the Congress were fundamental, and related to their varying concepts of national goal and the means to achieve it. The Nationalists placed before the country the ideal of Swaraj or independence, which might be realised ultimately, not in a remote period but in cognisable future. It was an absolute break with alien imperialism that they aimed at. It was their view that no empire can willingly liquidate itself, and self-interest, alone dictates its policy. Hence it was futile to expect that the British people, their Parliament would without effective compulsion yield power to the people of India. In such circumstances, the existing mode of petitions and prayers and appealing to the

sense of justice of the British nation, then the sole methods of constitutional agitation, were unrealistic and fruitless. Political pressure, exerted by the huge mass of Indian people, yielding to the conviction that the British self-interest would be jeopardised by the continuance of bureaucratic despotism, alone would yield the desired result. Thus simultaneously with the denunciation of the old technique, the Nationalists advocated adoption of the instrument of passive resistance, then signified by the threefold programme of Swadeshi, Boycott and National education, as the sole weapon of combat with British imperialism and the war cry of Swaraj. They believed in self-sacrifice, and self-reliance and called for constant, continuous non-association with the foreign government till it conceded power to the people of India. Two distinct groups emerged in the cadre of Nationalists, one having firm faith in non-violence and conscious of the futility of violent methods held out the programme of Passive Resistance, the other took to the revolutionary methods of violence, conspiracy, terrorism and ultimately armed struggle with the aid of foreign powers hostile to the British empire. Both the groups believed in mass effort and expressed admiration of the emergence of Japan as a great power and the symptoms of revolution then evident in Russia and many parts of Asia. Irish revolt aimed at Home Rule also provided stimulus to the violent wing. Both these groups came into prominence during Curzon's regime and intensified their activities when the partition of Bengal was effected. The Congress was then in the grips of moderate leaders who were loth to alter their methods of political action, and sincerely believed that Passive Resistance or violent revolution was doomed to failure in the circumstances in which the country was then placed.

Gokhale was not afraid of Passive Resistance but he did not believe it to be practical in the existing situation. Analysing the conditions under which initially Congress work was begun he said, "we have got to realise that on one side of us are arrayed forces of racial ascendancy, of monopoly of power, and on the other side is a vast mass of ignorance, apathy and moral helplessness." To "energise this vast mass" was "an exceedingly difficult work" which was "bound to be slow". The Congress had through agitation roused the national

impulse," and helped the growth of the sense of nationality: "To fight against the ascendancy of a dominant class" implies political work of the highest character," while the public life is really feeble and ineffective. However, Gokhale recognised change in the political atmosphere, and in 1907 he could see "first faint streaks of a new dawn." To him there was "much in the situation over which the heart most truly rejoices, but... there are elements present, which give rise to a feeling of anxiety." Nevertheless he was aware of the rising discontent and sullenness of the educated class which was determined to attain for itself a political status worthy of self-respect of civilised people. Then he outlined the goal which he envisaged in the existing circumstances. He recognised "no limit to my aspiration for our motherland. I want our people to be in their own country what other people are in theirs. I want our men and women, without distinction of caste or creed, to have opportunities to grow to the full height of their stature, unhampered by cramping and unnatural restrictions. I want India to take her proper place among the great nations of the world, politically, industrially, in religion, in literature, in science and in arts. I want all this and feel at the same time that the whole of this aspiration can, in its essence and in reality, be realised within this empire." For that alone was practicable. Even the Nationalist leaders like Tilak also did not visualise a status outside the Empire at that stage. The ideal of complete independence was not put forth as the demand of the country before 1929, though the revolutionaries had placed that objective much earlier.

The difference between the two wings of political leadership was thus one in the methods of attaining the goal. The goal of self-government within the Empire was to be realised by "what was called constitutional agitation." This involved action through "constituted authorities by bringing to bear on them the pressure of public opinion. That ruled out employment of physical force and tabooed 'rebellion, aiding or abetting a foreign invasion and resort to crime.'" And Gokhale was frank enough to say that "barring these things, all else was constitutional." For the success of this method, the main work was "to build up the strength of their own people," promotion of unity

among different sections and development of a stronger character. He did not approve of the new thinking which placed absolute faith in boycott and non-association with the government. Boycott of educational institutions and public services was not practicable and would lead to serious injury of national interest. Political boycott was impracticable, and passive resistance, leading to non-payment of taxes was not free from risk. Persistent reliance on constitutional agitation with fond hope in the good intentions of the rulers governed the policies and actions of the Moderates. However, Dadabhai Naoroji had given the cry for self-government and exhorted the "Indian people to claim unceasingly their birth right and pledged right of British citizenship of self-Government," because "self-government is the only remedy for India's woes and wrongs." In 1906 he gave the mantra of Swaraj, which became the goal. The Nationalists also stood for Swaraj connotation though their connotation did not imply colonial self-government. They wanted, as Tilak put it "people's rule instead of that of bureaucracy." Pal repudiated the notion of being guided by the British "in our attempts for political progress and emancipation." He wanted the Government of India to be "autonomous absolutely free of the British control." Defining the objective of the New Spirit he said. "It refuses to accept the position of servitude and subordination for an indefinite period...It accepts no other teacher in the art of self-government except self-government itself. It values freedom for its own sake, and desires autonomy immediate and unconditional, regardless of fitness or unfitness of the people for it because it does not believe serfdom, in any shape or form, to be a school for real freedom." Pal put forth the demands of the new party in concrete terms when he said, "It is not reform but re-form which is the new cry in the country. It is the abdication of the right of England to determine the policy of the Indian Government, the relinquishment of the right of the present foreign despotism to enact whatever law they please to govern the people of the country, the abandonment of their right to tax people according to their own sweet will and pleasure, and to spend the revenues of the country in any way they like." For this purpose the Nationalists advocated passive resistance. Tilak said, "If you have not the power of active resistance, have

you not the power of self-denial and self-abstinence in such a way as not to assist this foreign government to rule over you ?” And he called upon the people “to organise your power,” “prepare your forces,” but he abjured violence. Thus there was difference in the concept of the goal and wide gap between the methods of the Moderates and Nationalists to attain the goal. The smouldering fire of extremism burst forth into a flame when Curzon effected Partition of Bengal, and the split between the two parties occurred at Surat.

Provincial redistribution had been under discussion for some time, particularly because of the size of the province of Bengal. But no definite proposal had evolved nor the administration of that province affected. The creation of the province of Assam under a Chief Commissioner had not helped matters much, but the dismemberment of Bengal met with opposition from its bureaucracy, European merchants and the Indian public. Hence upto the time of Curzon neither the status of government was raised nor the burden of administration reduced, though the matter was being discussed at the secretarial level. The Viceroy considered the boundaries of Bengal, Assam, Central Provinces and Madras “antiquated, illogical and productive of inefficiency.” But it was not mere administrative convenience or its efficiency which influenced his thinking. He was opposed to the consolidation of the people of any region and as such was averse to the proposal of incorporating Berar into the province of Bombay as that might lead to “the solidarity of the Maratha community” and giving to Poona “enormous accretion of political strength.” This consideration applied to Bengal with greater force, particularly because, as Curzon believed, the intelligentsia of Bengal exercised immense influence over the politics of the whole of India. His ambition to kill the Congress demanded the disruption of Bengali solidarity and diminution of the hold of Eastern Bengal on the “politics of the province” and whittling the importance of Calcutta. Hence in 1903, the first proposal was made to transfer Chittagong division along with the districts of Dacca and Mymensingh to Assam. The scheme met with vehement opposition from the Bengal press, National Chamber of Commerce, Central National Muhammedan Association of Calcutta, the Zamindars

and by the people and public leaders. There was protest both in Dacca as well as Calcutta, but Curzon and his government were unimpressed. He agreed with Risley that "Bengal united is a power, Bengal divided will pull several different ways." In his tour of Chittagong and Dacca, he held out inducement of greater preponderating influence to Muslims in the administration of the new province, the creation of which would "develop local interests and trade." He appealed to "communal jealousy and pride" of the Muslims and held out "alluring prospects of economic prosperity," to vend his proposal. But the real motive which he disclosed to Brodrick, the Secretary of State, was to wreck the influence of Calcutta from where "the Congress party is manipulated throughout the whole of Bengal and indeed the whole of India," for there its best wire pullers reside. He wrote "the whole of their activity is directed to creating an agency so powerful that they may one day be able to force a weak government to give them what they desire." This political motive parented the proposal for partition of Bengal which was neither asked for by the Hindus or Muslims, nor because of solving the administrative problems, but as Dr. Tara Chand has rightly observed, "because the British rulers were alarmed at the growth of national solidarity in India, and were anxious to thwart it."

For a year, from December 1903 to January 1905, Bengali newspapers carried on agitation against partition, though on a moderate tone. But they had only vague idea of the government plan and for some time there was a lull in it. All that the people demanded was that the schemes might be published before its finalisation to enable discussion on it. In the meantime, Curzon's government was secretly developing a "diabolical plan" for the division of Bengal into two provinces, one comprising of Assam, Chittagong, and fifteen eastern districts, the other to include the remainder of Bengal proper with Bihar and Orissa, two non-Bengali speaking areas as its component parts. The eastern province was so conceived as to give the Muslims majority on it and thereby create distinct Muslim interest, in conflict with Hindu interest. The Bengali Hindu was in a minority in the east, while in the western province also there was greater numerical strength of the people of Bihar and



Orissa. Thus their influence in the legislatures of both the regions had decreased. In the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam Muslim population was 18 million to 12 million of Hindus, while in the western part 17 million Bengali speaking population was outnumbered by 37 million speaking Bihari and Oriya. The new province was intended to provide strong representation to Muslim interests. Curzon's main object was "to split up and thereby weaken a solid body of opponents to our rule," and prevent a small knot of men of Calcutta to manipulate public opinion throughout the whole of Bengal," and incidentally the whole of India. The new partition plan was secretly hatched in Calcutta, it received the approval of the Secretary of State on 9 June 1905, and was disclosed in the House of Commons in July. It was made known later through a government resolution. It received assent of the king and the Royal Proclamation was issued on 1st September. The Indian public was faced with an accomplished fact. The partition was to be effected on 16 October 1905. This precipitancy and the secrecy made the bitter pill bitterer and the reaction of Bengal, even the rest of India, was one of vehement opposition.

"A tearing and raging agitation followed in which all sections of people, old or young irrespective of profession or religion, joined and condemned the partition. Meetings were held all over the province which numbered more than 2000 and which were joined by "Hindus and Mohammedans with equal zeal and earnestness." The meeting in the Townhall of Calcutta on August 7, 1905 was largely attended and it adopted a resolution enjoining abstention "from the purchase from British manufacturers so long as the Partition Resolution is not withdrawn." Thus began a new chapter in the history of national movement. Mazumdar told the audience, "with the partition of Bengal political agitation in the country enters upon a new phase. It has unmistakably demonstrated two things; first the resolute despotism of the Government and secondly, the utter futility of the kind of agitation to which we have grown accustomed. We must now transfer our ideas from the sphere of thought to the sphere of action. We must practice self-respect in order to command respect from those who have learnt to treat us with contempt." Another meeting was held on 22 September and then the

Government prohibited meetings in Calcutta in the Maidan. A few days later a large number of people took the pledge in the Kali temple that they would not use foreign-made goods, would not purchase from the shops of foreign merchants "articles that are available at the shops of the people of the country," and would not "get anything done by a foreigner which can be done by a country man of mine." October 16, 1905, the date on which partition was effected was observed as a day of mourning, tying of Rakhi and complete fasting, so that no fires were lit to cook food. Thus, as Dr. Tara Chand has written, the protest movement "had broadened its nature and scope. It had inspired in the people a spirit of self-reliance and refusal to obey the arbitrary decisions of authorities. It had given impetus to the development of organised activity. It deepened the feeling of patriotic dedication and spread national consciousness on a very wide scale." At the same time the programme of Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education was adopted which came to be the new weapon of political resistance. The Indian Press lent its enthusiastic support and helped to intensify sentiments of opposition to government and zealous pursuit of the objective.

This demonstration of the solidarity of people and their resolve to unsettle the "settled fact", reverse the wheel of partition, infuriated the authorities, who in their helplessness to stem the rising tide of nationalism, signified by Swadeshi and Boycott resorted to repression which was let loose in the two Bengals. In Eastern Bengal, the new Lt. Governor, Fuller, "came down on the agitators with a heavy hand. Meetings were broken and political leaders were insulted and threatened. Gorkha troops were imposed on the populace and every endeavour was made to suppress the agitation. Participation of students was to be prevented by threatening to debar them from examination and government service, even by withholding grants to the schools. Shouting of the word Bande Mataram was banned so also the convening of political meetings. Disciplinary action was threatened against teachers and they could be punished even without the consent of the Universities. Newspaper editors were imprisoned and many leaders were deported. Regulation of Meetings Ordinance was issued "to silence or stifle the voice of the people." Fuller also employed the weapon of divide and rule by inciting

the Muslims against Hindus, fostering communal riots and even encouraging them to molest Hindus without fear of punishment. He promised favourable treatment in government service to the Muslims for to him, of the two wives, Hindu and Muslim, the second one was the favourite. He did not hesitate to let police and magistrate "wreck their will by indiscriminate assaults on the people and by heaping indignities on respectable men." Thus passed 1906 and 1907 with repression in full swing; but the will of the people was not broken and the anti-partition movement continued in full swing. There was enormous progress in the propagation of Swadeshi and reduction in the volume of imports particularly of cloth. Boycott also was actively adopted, foreign goods were boycotted, even bonfires of foreign cloth were organised. Students boycotted government educational institutions and national schools were opened to admit them. Bengal was determined, unmindful of sacrifice involved, to undo the partition and regain a united Bengal. The movement of Swadeshi and boycott spread far beyond the frontiers of Bengal. Maharashtra, Panjab and other provinces adopted the programme and thereby stimulated nationalism. Unrest was rampant all over the country. The Indian Press and political leaders condemned the action of Fuller and denounced his policy of unrestrained repression. Gokhale demanded punishment of officials of Eastern Bengal and the removal of Fuller. Tilak termed the orders promulgated there as "wanting in moral force from which all laws are derived." There was universal resentment of the measures taken by the Local Government to suppress the agitation, and the demand for self-government or Swaraj was voiced. The anti-partition movement grew into one of wider content, advocating Swaraj as the cure of present ills.

Even the mild Congress was stirred and its two sessions at Benaras and Calcutta took cognizance of the growing spirit of opposition and demand for boycott and Swadeshi as weapons to fight the scourge of partition was vehemently expressed. It was impossible to ignore the new Nationalist group and their vehement enunciation of the ideas of Swaraj and passive resistance. In 1904 the Congress recorded "its emphatic protest against the proposals of the Government of India for the Parti-

tion of Bengal in any manner whatsoever." The alternative of having a Governor with an Executive Council was proposed for Bengal to provide efficient administration. At the next session in Benaras, the tone of speeches and content of resolutions marked a new departure from the mildness of the past decades. The President, Gopal Krishan Gokhale, in his address, decried, the attitude of government in treating with contempt the opinions of Indian public men who were compelled "to realise the utter humiliation and helplessness of their own position." In such a situation he said, "all I can say is; goodbye to all hope of cooperating in any way with the bureaucracy in the interests of the people. I can conceive of no greater indictment of British rule than that such a state of things should be possible after a hundred years of that rule...The tremendous upheaval of popular feeling which has taken place in Bengal in consequence of the Partition will constitute a landmark in the history of our National progress." He justified the boycott as a political weapon, to be used only "as the last extremity". He condemned the British rule for its demoralising effect on the Indian people. His speech betokens change in the atmosphere; and when the Nationalists expressed their opposition to welcome the Prince of Wales, the temper of this group was frankly evident. The resolution against the Partition was moved by Surendra Nath Bennerji in his characteristic eloquence, and he pointed in lurid colours the repression launched by the government. But people were not cowed down and "men fortified by such belief (that God was with them) and working under such conviction are irresistible and invincible." Other speakers expressed their indignant protest and "anger and determination of India." This led Mrs Besant to write that "Not often has the National Congress witnessed such a scene of excitement." The resolution after ventilating "emphatic protest against the partition of Bengal," called upon the Government "to reverse or modify the arrangements made in such a manner as to conciliate public opinion; and demanded that "the entire Bengali community" be placed "under one undivided administration." It condemned repression and supported "boycott of foreign goods as a last protest and perhaps the only constitutional and effective means left to them of drawing the attention of the British public."

The next Congress at Calcutta in 1906 was the last session of undivided leadership. The whole atmosphere was charged with excitement and bubbling enthusiasm of the newer group. The old leadership did not welcome the idea of Tilak being the President, and invited Dadabhai Naoroji, the grand old man, to steer the ship of the Congress through troubled waters, and he succeeded in stemming the storm. Rash Bihari Ghosh, the Chairman of the Reception Committee, denounced repression in Barisal, the memory of which tragedy "will always fill us with shame and humiliation." He lauded the spirit of Swadeshism, and said "we love England with all her faults but we love India more. If this is disloyalty, we are, I am proud to say disloyal." Dadabhai Naoroji, while not radically departing from the old tenor, emphasised the claim of Indians to have that control in India which Englishmen had in England. He said, "The whole matter can be comprised in one word, Self-Government or Swaraj, like that of the United Kingdom or the colonies" for which "not only the time has arrived but had arrived long past." The resolutions adopted related to partition, boycott, Swadeshi, self-government and national education, the main items of the programme of Nationalists. The one on partition recorded "emphatic protest" and regretted that the Liberal Government in England "is disposed to look upon it as a settled fact," and impressed upon them the expediency of reversing or modifying it. Regarding boycott, the Congress expressed the opinion that as inaugurated in Bengal that movement "was, and is, legitimate," and thereby put its seal of approval on it. About Swadeshi it called upon the people "to labour for its success by making earnest and sustained efforts to promote the growth of the indigenous industries and to stimulate the production of indigenous articles by giving them preference over imported commodities, even at some sacrifice." Then the Congress demanded that the system of government obtaining in "Self-Governing British Colonies should be extended to India." Lastly it considered the time ripe for taking up "the question of National Education, suited to the requirements of the country on National lines and under National control." Thus all the demands of Nationalists were adopted in its own manner by the Congress of 1906, and thereby a split was avoided. The domina-

ting tone in this session was that of self-government, unity and perseverance. Dadabhai Naoroji in his peroration exhorted the people, "Be united, persevere and achieve self-government, so that the millions now perishing by poverty, famine and plague and the scores of millions that are starving on scanty subsistence may be saved and India may once more occupy her proud position of yore among the greatest Nations of the West."

The Calcutta resolutions were at best a compromise between the two radically divergent viewpoints of the Extremists and Moderates, and as compromises failed to reconcile either party to it, "Swaraj, Swadeshi and Boycott were interpreted in different ways" by the two wings of the Congress. The Moderate laid stress upon the economic aspects of Swadeshi and looked upon Boycott as a transitory measure to be cautiously used and only for the revocation of the partition. The Extremists were of the opinion that both Swadeshi and Boycott were principally weapons of political warfare of a disarmed subject people against the forces of the fully armed imperialist power." (Tara Chand) This wide gap in their thinking made united action difficult; but the prospect of some dose of constitutional reform administered by the Liberal Government in England, particularly with Morley as Secretary of State for India, prompted the Moderates to shun any action which might offend the rulers and harden them against granting reforms, however, paltry they might be. The Government was perturbed by the intensity of boycott agitation which had transgressed the borders of Bengal and had become almost an all-India movement, and took to the age old policy of divide and rule. Patronage extended to the princely order and preferential treatment to the Muslims with the promise of a better political deal for them were utilised as instruments to break the unity of the people and find support for government measures against the Nationalists. Morley's announcement of his intention to effect administrative reorganisation was intended to wean the Moderates from the growing political movement. The Secretary of State "raised hopes in Gokhale's mind of a liberal quota of reforms" The Moderates had not lost faith in the British and advent of the Liberal Party to power had fortified Gokhale and Dadabhai in their confidence in securing constitutional reforms. Hence the former met Morley

and advised his associates in India to prevent any expression of "want of faith in Morley" by the press or politicians. He made frantic efforts for reform which he believed were imminent. The Moderate leadership, therefore, desired to keep their sole control over the Congress and were anxious to save it from adopting the extremist line. Gokhale appealed to Morley to stop repression and expedite reforms to prevent the younger generation from drifting into the Extremist fold. Hence Pheroz Shah Mehta and his friends were prepared to revoke the Culcutta programme. On the other hand the Nationalists or Extremists having no faith in the good intentions of the government then assiduously engaged in "unleashed repression," declared their faith in boycott by which means they expected to exercise control over the administrative machinery. In 1907 agitation grew intense and with that also the pace of repression. In this situation united action between the Moderates and Nationalists was a far dream, and the Surat split was inevitable.

The differences between the two parties were of a fundamental nature unlikely to be healed by compromises for which neither group was prepared then. The Moderate's faith in loyalty and constitutional agitation, their strategy of winning the sympathy of the English nation and disbelief in the capacity of Indians to manage democratic institutions, were in marked contrast to the ideas held by extremists who had little faith in British Government, or the British people accepting national demand for self-government. Political situation also made it impossible for the two extremes to meet. The growing tide of boycott movement was opposed by the rising momentum of repression by the Government which interned leaders like Lajpat Rai and many in Bengal, as well as efforts to suppress the press in 1907. The next session was scheduled to be held in Nagpur which was a strong fort of extremism with a large following for Tilak. The Moderate leader Pheroz Shah Mehta would take no chances, particularly when there was near prospect for constitutional reforms, and taking advantage of differences in the Reception Committee, changed the venue of the Congress to Surat where his influence was paramount. Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh was chosen by the ruling party for the position of the President, despite the demand by Tilak for the election of Lala Lajpat Rai

who had been released from detention in Mandalay. Then the Congress met at Surat on 26 December 1907, there was a record gathering of 1600 members and all seemed well. But when the proposal for Rash Behari Ghosh was being seconded by Surendra Nath Bannerji tumult arose and the session was adjourned for the next day. Then the President assumed office amid "vociferous applause", but soon thereafter Tilak came to the dias "to move an amendment, either about an adjournment or to the Presidential election." An argument ensued, the President ruled him out of order. The majority of the delegates were in no mood to listen to Tilak and a shoe was flung at him which struck Mehta and Bannerji. This was the signal for a free fight, which was quelled by the police clearing the hall. Later that day, a few leaders of the Moderates called a National Convention to meet on the 28th December of the members who agreed to "the attainment by India of Self-Government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire, adhered to the "strictly constitutional means for" the advance to that goal, and accepted to conduct the meeting" in an orderly manner and submit to authority. 900 members signed the pledge and met to attend a Convention Committee to draw up a constitution for the Congress. The Extremists were left out and barred from attending the Congress by the rules made by the Committee at Allahabad in April 1908, which demanded prior acceptance in writing of the Article I of the Constitution which called for gradual process towards self-government by constitutional means. The adjourned Congress met in Madras in 1908 and for some years the cleavage between the two wings remained unhealed.

The split in the Congress in 1907 became inevitable in view of the expectation of "a liberal quota" of constitutional reforms hopes for which had been raised in Gokhale's mind by the talks he held with Morley, the Secretary of State. The Moderates relied upon his liberalism and made every effort to prevent the Nationalists from committing the "Congress to an extremist programme." As Dr. Tara Chand has pointed out "...the tug of war continued throughout the year...The two sides exerted themselves to the utmost for obtaining control over the most important political organisation of India viz the Indian National



Congress, which commanded not only the homage of nationalist India but was also recognised by the Government as an important factor in Indian politics, which could not be disregarded." The Moderates viewed with apprehension any "idea of the open struggle with the bureaucracy," and were not ready for taxing to "the rough and narrow way to salvation," while the Extremists wanted "to capture the Congress and to make it an instrument for revolutionary action." Mehta, Gokhale, Malviya and Bannerji did not want the Congress to fall into the grips of Tilak, Lajpat Rai and Aurobindo Ghosh, and therefore were prepared to adopt any measure to prevent it, lest the British Government should withhold the paltry reforms which followed after the break in the Congress. In the process, the Nationalists were isolated and suffered the onslaught of Government repression in full measure. The separation of the Muslims from the main current of national activity and the formation of the Muslim League further strengthened the hands of Minto who, despite Morley's protests, took to severe measures of repression. Ordinances were issued to ban political activity and antiquated Regulations were utilised to deport political leaders. Tilak was tried and sentenced to six years imprisonment in Mandalay. Aurobindo Ghosh was in detention for a year being implicated in the Alipur Bomb case. Many leaders in Bengal were deported. The Press was gagged and meetings were proscribed. There was great restlessness in various provinces where anti-partition agitation, marked by boycott of British goods and propagation of Swadeshi, was in full swing. And it was not till the Partition of Bengal had been annulled in 1911, that the movement subsided. An important repercussion of the repressive policy of the Government was that the political agitation went underground and gave fillip to sedition, secret activities by the youth and resort to pistol and bomb as reprisals for severity of prosecution. The intensification of secret revolutionary activities was the most important development of the anti-partition agitation and the Minto-Morley policy of repression and reform. Conspiracies continued to be hatched and efforts were made to overthrow the alien bureaucratic government by open armed revolt aided by foreign support, till Mahatma Gandhi put forth his programme of non-violent non-cooperation.

The methods adopted by the revolutionaries were radically different from those of the Nationalists and the Moderates, and were in line with the violent resistance of the earlier days. "They were inspired by an intense love of the motherland and were spurred by enthusiasm to wrest freedom quickly from alien hands." They were influenced by the violent revolutionary movements for freedom in Italy, Ireland and Russia whose example they followed and adopted the cult of the pistol and bomb. Formula for the manufacture of bomb was also got from there. They believed that the British, moved by their imperial self-interest, would not relinquish power except under immense compulsion. Hence war against British domination became their creed for which they resorted to seditious activities, terrorisation of the bureaucracy and ultimately armed revolt joined by the Indian army and aided by foreign powers, hostile to the British. To achieve this object a number of secret societies were established in Bengal, the chief of which was Anushilan Samiti with its twin centres at Calcutta and Dacca. This was the most active and important with its 116 branches and about 9000 members. Barendra Kumar Ghosh and Pulin Behari Das were two leaders who provided the impulse. Besides this Samiti there were organisations as Swadesh Bandhava Samiti of Barisal, the Suhrid Samiti of Mymensingh, the Brati Samiti of Faridpur and the Sadhana Samaj of Mymensingh. Their role in the anti-partition agitation was no mean one, but the actual output, apart from striking some terror in the official mind and spurring the movement by their occasional infructuous strikes was infinitesimal. They resorted to dacoities for obtaining money to finance their activities. The Muzaffarpur murders committed by Khudi Ram Bose, were followed by the murder of Jackson, Collector of Nasik, Curzon Wylie in London by Madan Lall Dhingra and a C.I.D. official in Calcutta. Attempts on the life of the Lieutenant Governor and Governor-General were also made but without effect. A bomb was thrown in 1912 on Lord Hardinge by Rash Behari Bose in Delhi, but the Viceroy escaped death. Arms were smuggled into the country through the South East Asian Countries, and preparations were made for general rising in 1915, but the information reached the

Government which frustrated the whole attempt. Outside Bengal revolutionary activities and secret societies had been formed in Maharashtra, Lahore and Benaras besides London, Paris and San Francisco. Savarkar, Hardayal, Shyamji Krishna Varma, and Amir Chand were the chief leaders. In this manner, till about the end of World War I, revolutionary activities continued to stir the people from time to time and intensify anti-British feelings, particularly among the youth. The Government of India resorted to repression and passed laws to crush the movement. Conspiracies were detected and their members punished ruthlessly. During the war the Defence of India Act was passed arming the Government with extensive powers to crush such activities.

Besides repression, the Government took steps to wean away the Muslims from the mainstream of political activity and diverge the Moderates and the aristocratic and other vested interests from the Nationalist programme. The Muslim middle class was kept aloof from the Congress by exploiting its fear of being submerged by the Hindu majority in any scheme of democratic and representative institutions. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan provided leadership in this move and preached exclusion of the Muslims from the Congress. In a large measure he was influenced in this course by the English Principals of his pet institution the Anglo-Mohammedan College of Aligarh, and the patronage which he received as recompense from the British Government. Curzon had conceived his plan of partition of Bengal to win over the confidence of the Muslims and permanently create a wedge between the two communities to weaken, if not actually to kill, the national movement. But it was left to Minto to introduce the most vicious principle of separate electorates for the Muslims in his scheme of constitutional reforms and create an organisation of the Muslims as a counter-poise to the Congress movement. Minto firmly believed that the Muslims "required special safeguards" in India. He ridiculed the concept of United India which he said "in a Congress sense is a myth." Thus when Morley gave indication of the prospective reforms in his Indian budget speech in August 1906, the plot of the Simla Deputation was hatched. The management of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh,

was alarmed at the prospect of young educated Muslims joining the Congress. They were gripped by the fear that when elections would be adopted on an extended scale the Mohammadans would scarcely get a seat, Hindus carrying "off the palm by dint of their majority." Hence Mohsin-ul-Mulk asked Archbold, the Principal of the College, "if it would be advisable to submit a memorial from the Mohammadans" to the Viceroy "and wait in deputation on him." Archbold was in intimate touch with Dunlop Smith, the Private Secretary to the Viceroy, who arranged for the reception of the deputation by Minto. The Viceroy was happy to employ the Muslims to assist us "in dealing with much of the one-sided agitation we have to face" from the Congress. The memorial was drafted by Archbold and Mohsin-ul-Mulk was contemplating the formation of a political organisation to ventilate the interests of the Muslims. The deputation was led by Agha Khan and comprised of a number of nawabs and knighted gentlemen whose vested interests coincided with British intentions to thwart Congress aspirations. They urged that "in any kind of representation, direct or indirect, the position of the Muslim Community as such "shall be commensurate not merely with their numerical strength, but also with their political importance and the value of contribution which they make to the defence of the Empire," as also their status before British rule. Minto delivered a most sympathetic reply assuring the deputationists "that any electoral representation in India would be doomed to mischievous failure which aimed at granting a personal enfranchisement regardless of the beliefs and traditions of the communities composing the population of this continent." He further assured them "that their political rights and interests as a community will be safeguarded by any administrative re-organisation with which I am concerned." Minto was patted on the back by Morley for having "done a valuable day's work." Thereafter Muslim politics moved fast and on 30th December at Dacca the All-India Muslim League was formed with its aims "to promote among the Musalmans of India feelings of loyalty to the British Government," to protect and advance the political rights and interests of Musalmans of India and to respectfully represent their needs and aspirations to Government. With its recognition by the Viceroy as "a very

representative Mohammedan body to which we should naturally refer for an opinion on any question of importance," a communal organisation was created as a counterpoise to the Congress and the cause of nationalism which it represented." And in the actual scheme of constitutional reforms the Muslims were given separate electorates and representation disproportionate to their population. Thus was introduced a divisive element which ultimately paved the path for the partition of India.

The British Government had planned to beguile the Moderates with a limited dose of constitutional reforms and as such the Indian Councils Act of 1909 was passed by the British Parliament. Morley had made it plain that the new Act was not in any way conceived to introduce parliamentary form of government which might be directed towards introducing, even in a limited form, responsible government, making the executive wing accountable to the legislature for its policies and actions. All that was done was to increase the quantum of representation of Indians into the legislature, though in the Central Legislative Council, official majority was retained. In the provincial councils, however, a larger number of non-officials was introduced without relinquishing the opportunity of securing easy passage of official proposals. The principle of election was also accepted in a limited way and the power of the legislature was enhanced so as to discuss the budget, put interpellations to the executive and move resolutions of general nature. The Governor-General or the Governor was the President of the Council and no motion could be moved without his previous assent. One Indian was added to the Viceroy's Executive Council, and two were included in the Council of the Secretary of State in London. These changes, however, did not effect any radical alteration in the reposition of authority, the mode of policy decision or the system of administration. Thus the reforms being paltry were unlikely to assuage the feelings of the people, wholly satisfy the Moderates or bring back the Nationalists to the path of reconciliation with the government. The Congress also, under Moderate leadership, considered them inadequate. The revolutionaries were not prepared even to look at them. Thus there was little abatement either in the pace of seditious activities or peaceful agitation and

despite mounting repression represented by restrictions on the press and meetings there was no respite for the government. It was clear then that without the reversal of the partition of Bengal and more liberal political concessions, the country might drift rapidly into revolution. Therefore, when in 1911, the new King Emperor George V ascended the throne of England, the occasion was utilised for his visit to India. As a preliminary to that the Viceroy in his despatch of 25 August 1911, which was intended for publication, recommended the annulment of the partition of Bengal and its reunification as well as the direction of constitutional progress in the future. He wrote, "Nevertheless it is certain that, in the course of time, just demands of Indians for a larger share in the government of the country will have to be satisfied, and the question will be how the devolution of power can be conceded without impairing the supreme authority of the Governor-General in Council. The only possible solution of the difficulty would appear to be gradually to give the provinces a larger measure of self-government, until at last, India would consist of a number of administrations, autonomous in all provincial affairs, with the Government of India above them all, possessing power to interfere in case of misgovernment, but ordinarily restricting their functions to Imperial concern." The proclamation by the King in December 1911 of a united Bengal completely deflated the anti-partition agitation marked by boycott and Swadeshi, and Bengal subsided into comparative quiescence.

1911 Despatch raised new hopes in India which were soon dashed by the interpretation given by Crew, the Secretary of State, to the passage relating to the direction of future constitutional trend. Reference to autonomous provincial administrations was taken by the Congress and other Indian leaders to imply inauguration of provincial autonomy, accompanied by introduction of responsible government in the sphere of provincial administration. Popular provincial governments with an irresponsible federal structure at the top, wholly accountable to the imperial government in England was believed to be the object of the statement, cry for provincial autonomy was the new slogan adopted by nationalist India. But Crew interpreted the despatch as indicating further steps in decentralisation of

provincial administration which had commenced in 1870. He denied that there was any hint of responsible government being introduced. This disclaimer roused vehement criticism and Indian leadership failed to be reconciled to this narrow interpretation and pinned its faith to provincial autonomy with responsibility devolving on the representatives of the people in the legislatures. Limited responsible government was envisaged by them and till 1917 various schemes, such as the Congress-League scheme or the Nineteen Memorandum all expressed this objective of Moderate leadership. The Nationalists were under restraint, and till the release of Tilak in 1914, there was little activity in that camp. Meanwhile marked change had come about in the politics of the Muslim League which had been initiated to inculcate loyalty to British rule, safeguard the special rights of the Muslims and protect the vested interests of their upper classes. However, such a close organisation of aristocratic elements could not long inspire confidence in the community and, soon disillusioned by the reversal of the Bengal partition and British hostility to Turkey, the youthful, progressive element captured the Muslim League and sought closer ties with the Congress in carrying forward its political programme. Thus when the first World War began there was increasing tendency towards the coalescence of diverse political forces and prospect of united action to win better constitutional reforms when the war ended. Also the declaration of the principle of self-determination by President Wilson, raised new hopes and animated political activity in the country.

Gradual exit of the "aristocratic top notches" from the Muslim League, who found the situation too hot led youthful element with "men like Jinnah and Muhammad Ali" to take "the reins in their hands." It became a middle class movement and came nearer to the Congress. But, as Dr. Tara Chand has pointed out, "the collaboration which now began was more of the nature of an alliance of two organised and self-conscious bodies representing two distinct communities with their special problems and ideologies, for mutual aid against a common foe, than of fusion. The Hindu-Muslim cooperation and unity of the years 1911-12, demonstrated that it was no longer possible to think in terms of a homogeneous and monolithic nationalism,

and that in order to achieve eventually such a nationalism it would be necessary to pass through a stage of polycentric socio-political order. However, at the moment rapprochement raised new hopes. In 1913, the League altered its object from loyalty to British Government to "attainment under the aegis of the British Crown, of self-government suited to India." This ideal together with the declaration of the necessity for harmonious cooperation "by joint concerted action" by the leaders was welcomed by the Congress in its Karachi Session, and hope was expressed that by the unity of the various communities, "India of the future will be stronger, nobler, greater...and brighter India". In 1915 Congress and the League met in Bombay simultaneously and their leaders exchanged views. The League appointed a committee to formulate a common scheme of reforms in consultation with other political organisations. The two bodies again met at the same place, Lucknow, in 1916, where "they came to a complete agreement on the reforms which they would urge upon the Government", and the Lucknow Pact conceding the League demand for separate electorate in all the provinces and fixing the proportion of Muslim seats in the Legislatures was adopted. Guarantees were also offered to the Muslims concerning respect for their culture and religious laws, and it was agreed that no bill or resolution would be passed if three-fourths of the members of the community were opposed, to it. By this Pact the Muslims gained weightage in representation very much higher than their population warranted. It was unanimously agreed that (1) "special or separate electorates for the Muslims in the Provincial Councils will be granted with the following proportions : Panjab 50 per cent, United Provinces 30 per cent, Bengal 40 per cent, Bihar 25 per cent, Central Provinces 15 per cent, Madras 15 per cent, Bombay  $33\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. (2) The Imperial Legislative Council should consist of altogether 150 members, of whom 120 should be non-officials and one-third of the elected members Muslims." With this hurdle crossed over, the Congress resolved that "it is of opinion that the time has come when His Majesty the King-Emperor should be pleased to issue a proclamation announcing that it is the aim and intention of British policy to confer self-government on India at an early date."



The tale of split in the Congress and the ouster of the Nationalists or Extremists from it has been narrated earlier. The change in its constitution limiting right of electing delegates to a restricted category of associations had kept them out of the Congress since 1908, and the imprisonment of Tilak for six years, the trial of Aurobindo Ghosh for conspiracy and his retirement to French possessions, together with the clamping of repressive laws on the Extremists made them lie low, and compelled the youth to take more and more to secret societies with their programme of subversion and terrorism. This unhealthy situation was sought to be rectified, but as long as Pheroze Shah Mehta lived no prospect of unity was practicable. When Tilak was released from Mandalay, Mrs Annie Basant, the stormy petrel of the nationalist movement, who had shifted the venue of her activities from religion to politics, made strenuous efforts to heal the breach. But it founded on the rock of Mehta's adamant attitude. His death in November 1915, preceded by that of Gokhale in the month of February cleared the hurdle for unification and the Congress session of 1915, modified the Constitution so as to render it possible for any association of two years existence to elect delegates. The result was that in 1916 at Lucknow the Nationalists attended in large numbers and within two years captured the organisation to the great chagrin of Moderates who even considered formation of a separate body. Thus Lucknow brought the Muslim League into the national stream and united the two wings of the Congress. This was the signal for determined efforts to gain self-government for which the occasion seemed to be opportune. The war in Europe had brought the United States within it, and the principle of self-determination was vociferously proclaimed by President Wilson. India's contribution to British war efforts, which was eventually crowned with success, both in men money and material had been immense, and was recognised by British statesmen. There was greater political awakening in India and younger elements were stirred by unprecedented enthusiasm for freedom. The obstacle of disunity had been removed. The Nineteen Memorandum containing minimum political aspirations of India had been sent to the British Government by the elected members of the Legislative Council of India and the Congress resolutions of

1916 had demanded proclamation of the intention to grant self-government to India by the British Crown, so that "India should be lifted from the position of a dependency to that of an equal partner in the Empire with the self-governing Dominions." At the same time the Home Rule League had been formed which had the active participation of students and ardent nationalists, so that the nation had been enthused to press for self-government. These were happy signs of a change which was fast coming over the country and the year 1917 was the harbinger of an altered national movement. The movement for freedom could not remain static; the British Government was conscious of the need for change and officers like Meston had pressed for some declaration of self-government for India within the Empire, for they realised that the youth could not be kept under restraint for long. The masses were becoming conscious and had assumed, even though a passive, a definite role in the march of India towards Swaraj. They could not be ignored and, therefore, the old mode of constitutional agitation was bound to be affected by the intrusion of this new element into the politics of the land. The spirit of Swaraj was in the atmosphere, and self-reliance was the new motto. Action and not merely resolutions was the demand of the moment, Swadeshi, boycott, national education, passive resistance were the weapons, which had been tested in limited fields and had shown results in restricted spheres. Thus in the altered international situation, with new ideas of revolution and the growing intensity of political activity in the country, a radical change in the mode of operation was called for. The country needed a leader to give form and expression to the latest passion for freedom and unite the various currents which had flowed in India to advance political consciousness and promote the cause of liberty. In 1916, the freedom movement had turned a corner and the way was clear for its emergence into new channels. In this situation Mahatma Gandhi came to the forefront and led the nation forward on the road to freedom.

The Congress had done its preliminary task of rousing consciousness, creating political awareness, and providing an organisation to lead the nation forward. Old leadership had fulfilled its part, and had paved the way for the next stage of non-violent non-corporation, civil dis-obedience and complete independence.

## *Non-Cooperation Movement*

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The year 1916 is a great landmark in the progress of Indian national movement. Two outstanding events happened in that year. One was the emergence of a truly national front by the re-entry of Tilak and his supporters into the Congress and the Lucknow Pact which accepted the special status of the Muslims as a minority community and led to cooperation between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League in presenting a joint scheme for constitutional reforms. The Congress League Scheme and the Nineteen Memorandum, a direct consequence of this unity, stimulated corresponding action on the governmental side, culminating in the Montagu Declaration of 20th August 1917, defining the objective of Indian constitutional progress and leading to the constitutional reforms of 1919. The other major event was the inauguration of the Home Rule agitation by two Home Rule Leagues, initiated respectively by Lokmanya Tilak and Mrs. Annie Besant, almost simultaneously. The demand for self-government had been the battle-cry of the Nationalists and reechoed from many platforms, including the Congress. The only difference between the two wings of political workers related to the nature of self-government. One was content with self-government on colonial lines, within the British Empire, while the other had pitched its ideal to that of independence. But the actual phrase, Home Rule, and the movement for its attainment, owed its origin to Annie Besant and Baptista in 1914. Mrs. Besant wrote that national energies should be directed "to win self-government, Home Rule and

make the reforms for ourselves", "instead of asking for Reforms piecemeal". She used the phrase Home Rule "as a short, popular cry", for winning liberty within the empire. Baptista on 8 May 1915, in his presidential address at the Poona Conference, advised the people to "help Great Britain in the War and demand Home Rule at the same time". Subsequently Tilak took up this note and started the Home Rule League on 2 April 1916 and the Nationalist Conference at Belgaum confirmed it. Mrs. Besant's Home Rule League was established early in 1916 at Madras. Both the Leaders worked in close union, and their Leagues were initially confined to definite regions, not for the whole of India, but Mrs. Besant's League had set up branches in Bombay, Ahmadnagar, Kanpur, Allahabad and Banaras. At the Lucknow Congress the Home Rulers were a great force and a resolution was adopted urging the leagues to carry on propaganda in favour of the Congress-League Scheme. Both the Home Rule leagues insisted on maintaining British connection though in the domestic sphere of government they emphasised total non dependence on any foreign power. In 1917, the leagues collected money, published tracts and started the journal 'YOUNG INDIA', which was later taken up by Mahatma Gandhi. Meetings were held in various places which created immense enthusiasm among the young. Students took active share in propagating the idea and taking the message of Home Rule, from house to house, and even in rural areas. The internment of Mrs. Besant and her two associates, Arundale and Wadia, in June 1917 by the Government of Madras sparked off agitation throughout the country compelling it to release them; and Mrs. Besant was elected as the President of the 1917 Calcutta Congress. Memorials demanding Home Rule were signed by immense numbers and when submitted to Montagu they had to be carried in five carts. The sole purpose of the Home Rule League was to pressurise public in Britain to grant self-government to India through Parliamentary action. This movement gathered momentum beyond expectation and galvanised the whole atmosphere in the country. Political agitation became popular, embracing practically all sections of the population, the youth, women, rural communities and urban intelligentsia. Govern-

ment repression hardened the spirit and proposal was mooted to adopt passive resistance as the weapon to secure freedom for the internees. This movement brought prominently into view the effectiveness of mass agitation and gave concrete form to the demand for Swaraj.

As a protest against Besant's internment, passive resistance was contemplated and in the months of August and September 1917 various Provincial Congress Committees considered it. Their reaction was not unanimous. While Bombay, Burma and Panjab Committees advised postponement, United Provinces considered it inadvisable in the existing situation, and Madras favoured it. But owing to the declaration made by Montagu in Parliament on 20 August 1917 on the policy of the British Government relating to the establishment of responsible government in India, the programme of passive resistance was dropped. Meanwhile the war in Europe had given ample evidence of the loyalty and cooperation of Indian people in Britain's hour of trial. More than a million men had been recruited for the armed forces to fight in the battlefields of Europe and West Asia, immense funds were collected for war expenses and India grew into a "vital supply base for vast quantities of small arms and ammunition, clothing and food supplies to allied armies". The magnitude of such war efforts surprised the British people and their statesmen who openly acknowledged the value of this help, and in the first flush of sentimental appreciation, the Under Secretary of State for India in his speech to the House of Commons, declared that Indian claims to partnership in the empire would gain recognition. "worthy of her fighting races, and the patriotism of her sons". In India a sense of pride was roused by the fact of Indians fighting shoulder to shoulder with the British and turning the scales in favour of the Allies in many battlefields. "The myth of the invincibility of the British arms and the superiority of the white man was exploded. Ideas of equality of races and partnership in a free empire began to be entertained as practical issues". Even Moderates declared "self-government as the goal of India's progress" and Tilak and Besant vociferously voiced the demand for Home Rule. The whole country was suffused with a new spirit of freedom. In this state of public excitement it was

impossible for British statesmen to rest on the oars and take no steps to appease Indian opinion. Subsequent to Hardings' despatch of 1911, demand for provincial autonomy had been raised by Indian leaders; and as a consequence of Lucknow Pact, a scheme of constitution was framed. The united Congress at Lucknow demanded that "His Majesty the King Emperor should be pleased to issue a proclamation announcing that it is the aim and intention of British policy to confer self-government on India at an early date". The Government of India was also engaged in an exercise of constitution-making and had presented a halting scheme of reforms. At the India Office also a committee was appointed to examine the Viceroy's proposals, consensus of opinion was in favour of developing free institutions with a view to ultimate self-government within the empire, as Chamberlain put it. Meston, Lt. Governor of United Provinces also told the Viceroy that "National pride would be deeply stirred and national susceptibilities would be enormously soothed if a Royal Proclamation were to announce the acceptance of self-government for India within the Empire as the goal of our policy". In July 1917 there was change in the control of India Office when Montagu, a strong critic of the policies and practices of the Government of India, was appointed Secretary of State for India. He was a believer in immediate declaration of policy, and consequently the Declaration of 20th August 1917 was made. The announcement stated: "The policy of H.M. Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire". He further added "that progress in this policy can be achieved by successive stages. The British Government and the Government of India on whom the responsibility lies for the welfare and advancement of the Indian peoples must be the judges of the time and measure of each advance, and they must be guided by the cooperation received from those on whom new opportunities of service will thus be conferred, and by the extent to which it is found that confidence can be reposed in

their sense of responsibility". The provinces were to be the fields for initiating the process of responsible government and the progressive stages of development towards full responsibility were to be pledged by the rulers. The word self-government, which was in essence nebulous, was altered to responsible government on the insistence of some members of the Cabinet. Thus in the middle of 1917, the direction of constitutional progress was defined with a view to pacify public opinion in India and wean it away from the revolutionary ideas and programmes which were then current in India and spelled danger to the stability of the empire here.

Before the end of the year 1917, one important event had occurred heralding the advent of Mahatma Gandhi into the Indian political field, and proved the efficacy of non-violent passive resistance in limited fields as well as the response to that appeal among the agriculturists and industrial labour. It related to Champaran in Bihar, where Mahatma Gandhi started his satyagraha to protect the interests of cultivators from oppression committed by the indigo planters. He disobeyed the order issued by the magistrate debarring him from entry into the district of Motihari and stood for trial and pleaded guilty. The Government, however, withdrew the prosecution and appointed a commission consisting of the representatives of government, landlords, planters and tenants. Mahatma Gandhi represented the last element. The report of the commission was a vindication of his stand and the justice of tenant's cause. Redress soon followed and the evil of indigo plantation disappeared within a short time. This was followed by satyagraha in Kaira district in Gujarat and the industrial labour dispute in Ahmadabad which both came about in the year 1918, and afforded added proof of the effectiveness of the new weapon wielded by its maker, and paved the way for its adoption in a wider field.

In the constitutional sphere, Montagu declaration had altered the face of political agitation. Passive resistance move was dropped and instead popular effort was directed towards exerting pressure on the government to expedite the advent of responsible government. There was some disappointment among the younger section and the revolutionary movement went on

apace, but the general trend was peaceful. Montagu had come to India and along with Chelmsford, the Viceroy, toured the country, met delegations from various interest groups and entertained memoranda. Expectation of political advance had led to a mushroom growth of sectional organisations, communal and otherwise, and spelled danger to the integrity of national movement which the Congress-League rapprochement had cemented. The Congress met in December 1917 in Calcutta with Mrs. Besant as its president. She urged the passing of a Bill in 1918 to establish self-government in India on the lines of the Dominions within five or ten years which would be devoted to transference of government from British to Indian hands. The Congress resolution welcomed the pronouncement of the British intent to establish responsible government in India and urged the "necessity for the immediate enactment of a Parliamentary Statute providing for the establishment of responsible government in India, the full measure to be attained within a time-limit to be fixed in the Statute itself at an early date". It also demanded the immediate introduction of the Congress-League Scheme of Reforms "as the first step in the progress". All eyes were turned to the report by Montagu on constitutional reforms. But the appointment of a Committee under the chairmanship of Rowlatt "to investigate and report on the nature and extent of criminal conspiracies connected with the revolutionary movement in India and to advise as to the legislation necessary to deal effectively with them" operated as a rift in the lute and was condemned by the Congress as an attempt to arm the executive with additional powers endangering the liberty and safety of the people.

Montagu-Chelmsford Report on constitutional reforms was published in June 1918 and met with mixed reception, disappointment and joyous expectation mingled to greet the scheme of constitutional development. The basic principle of the Report was experiment in responsible government in a limited field in the provinces, where also, as in the Government of India, the elements of unaccountability to the legislatures and people and bureaucratic government predominated. There was to be no change in the character of executive authority which was to be responsible to, and controlled by British Cabinet and Parlia-



ment. Only there was enlargement of the legislature with a non-official majority and having the right to vote the budget, adopt resolutions on general policy or particular matters and pass verdict on executive action. The executive was paramount, not dependent on the vote and will of the legislature. In the provinces, however, the entire field of administration was divided into two parts, the Reserved and Transferred subjects. In the latter category came subjects like education, sanitation, local self-government and other minor subjects in the case of which in earlier decentralisation plans provincial governments had been allowed greater discretion. The major fields of administration, like law and order, land revenue, etc., were controlled by the irresponsible executive under the Governor and not accountable to the provincial legislature. Such a halting concession to the demand for self-government could scarcely enthuse the large majority of nationalist opinion in the Congress and the Muslim League who wanted definite assurance of full responsible government of the "Dominion type within a time limit of five to twenty years". But the Moderate section, wooed by Montagu, hailed the Montford scheme and was prepared to accept it as the first instalment of constitutional progress. A special session of the Congress was held in Bombay on 29 August 1918, to consider the Reform scheme which was declared to be 'disappointing and unsatisfactory'. It affirmed its faith in the principles contained in the Congress-League scheme, "and declared that nothing less than Self-Government within the Empire would satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the Indian people. It declared that the people of India were fit for Responsible Government and repudiated the assumption to the contrary contained in the Report". Simultaneous advance in the provinces and the Government of India was insisted upon, but in case a Declaration of Rights was made guaranteeing to the people, "liberty of person, property, association, free speech and writing" right to bear arms, freedom of the press, and equality before law, the Congress was prepared to let the Government of India "have undivided administrative authority on matters directly concerning peace, tranquillity and defence of the country". Various modifications were suggested "which were considered absolutely necessary to constitute a substantial

step towards Responsible Government". Dyarchy was suggested for the central government, reserved subjects being confined to "relations with Colonies and Dominions, Army, Navy and relations with Indian ruling Princes". The remaining subjects were to be transferred subjects, the Governor-General in relation to them having the same role as in the Dominions. In the provincial field, the Congress considered them fit for provincial autonomy but was prepared to accept the division between Reserved and Transferred subjects as a temporary measure. A time limit of 15 years was fixed for the entire transference of full responsible government both in the Centre and provinces. Proposals were also made regarding legislatures both in respect of numbers, their character and powers. It was thus evident that in its existing shape the Mont-ford Scheme was unacceptable, but there was genuine desire to work it, if there was definite assurance of full responsible government within a time limit and effective modifications were made directed at devolving power on the people through their legislatures to control administration and Indian element in the executive was introduced or enlarged. The schism in the Congress was prevented and the Muslim League also towed the line adopted by it.

Between the special session and the annual meeting of the Congress in December 1918, war had come to an end by the Armistice on November 11, and the principle of self-determination had been declared by the Allied leaders. Also the Mont-ford Reforms scheme had been examined by the Indian public opinion and reconsidered in all its bearings. The Congress emphasised the importance of the "recognition of India by British Parliament and by the Peace Conference as one of the progressive nations to whom the principle of self-determination should be applied". It demanded that an Act of Parliament be passed "establishing at an early date complete Responsible Government in India and a place for India similar to that of the Self-Governing Dominions in the reconstruction of Imperial policy". The resolution of the Special session relating to constitutional reforms was reiterated, and though the moderate leaders sought deletion of the words 'disappointing and unsatisfactory' the original phraseology was maintained. The Rowalatt

Committee Report, which had been meanwhile published, was condemned as the legislation suggested would "interfere with fundamental rights of the Indian people and impede the healthy growth of public opinion, and adversely affect working of the constitutional reforms. Repeal of repressive legislation like the Defence of India Act, the Press Act, the Seditious Meetings Act along with old Regulations, which imposed restraints on freedom of speech and association was demanded. By the close of 1918, however, though no serious symptoms of intense agitation were visible on the surface, the atmosphere was surcharged with excitement and revolutionary sentiments and activities had not been discontinued. Also signs of rift between the Moderates and Extremists were evident. National movement was on the threshold of a new plunge for which the platform was provided by the reactionary policies of the Government of India and its ultra-conservation bureaucracy.

The proposals for constitutional reforms were presented to the Parliament in the form of the Government of India Bill in July 1919 which was passed at the end of December, and except for minor changes incorporated the basic principles underlying the Mont-ford Report. In the debate on the Bill, reference was made to the "future status of India as one of a Dominion" and even the Instrument of Instructions defined the "end of the progressive realisation of responsible government to be that British India may attain its due place among the Dominions". There was no vital change in the structure of the Government of India at the centre except for the enlargement of the size and enhancement of some functions of the central legislature. In the provinces, however, the new principle of greater autonomy with the division of the functions into two parts, reserved and transferred, with partial responsibility was adopted. In its essence the alteration did not affect the ultimate control of British Parliament over Indian administration, whether at the centre or in the provinces, and provisions were not lacking for its exercise. The bureaucracy had not taken kindly to the change and felt that the dyarchical arrangement was bound to fail. The political parties naturally felt disappointment yet they were prepared to work the reforms, even the Moderates who had broken away from the Congress were halting in their

applause of the constitutional changes which they characterised "as constituting a real and substantial step towards progressive realisation of responsible government" and desired modifications and improvements. The conservative Muslim opinion, despite separate electorates, was "frightened by the general trend of the scheme" and demanded greater representation. Nonetheless, till the close of the year 1919, there was no lack of the will to work the reforms. Tilak was prepared to work them in a spirit of responsive cooperation and Gandhi had pleaded for their acceptance. Yet certain events, unconnected with the constitutional changes, occurred which wrecked this resolve and heralded a radical change in the nature of political struggle. The occasion and setting of the reforms were also not propitious. War had brought scarcity and famine had gripped the country. In the industrial field labour problems were assuming a new dimension. There was a wave of unsettlement in the social field and old values and earlier notions of loyalty were rapidly growing faint. The emergence of the masses as a political factor and the assimilation of agrarian or labour interests, though in a small measure, in the political demand were important elements, so also was the growing communal harmony. Revolutionary violence-oriented activities had touched a sympathetic chord in popular mind and their leaders were acclaimed as national heroes. The Home Rule agitation had brought the masses and the youth to the forefront of national struggle and ideas of sacrifice, passive resistance and self-reliance held the imagination of the people. In this background paltry constitutional reforms had scant chance of success and failed to appease the public mind. And in that setting the Turkish question relating to the status of the Khilafat and the enactment of the Rowlatt Act, arming the executive with summary powers to deal with revolutionary activities, precipitated conflict with the British authorities.

When Turkey joined Germany, despite appeals by some Muslim organisations in India to side with the British, the Indian Muslims were seriously perturbed. There was conflict between loyalty to the head of religion and allegiance to foreign rule. But the earlier assurances given by Lloyd George "to maintain the integrity of Turkish homeland" and the holy places when

he declared in unequivocal terms, "Nor are we fighting to deprive Turkey of its Capital or of the rich and renowned lands of Asia Minor and Thrace which are predominantly Turkish in race", had led to the despatch of Muslim troops to fight the Turkish armies in Mesopotamia and other places. However, action belied these promises. The revolt of Sharif Hussain of Mecca, egged on by Lawrence, and joined by British forces compelled the Turks to relinquish Arab lands. At the same time, goaded by the British the Greeks attacked Turkey and occupied Smyrna and the coast line. In the treaty of Sevres which was forced upon the Sultan, Turkish homelands were taken, Thrace given to Greece and Armenia and large parts of Asia Minor were divided between France and England under the guise of Mandatories. The Sultan, who was the Khalifa, was reduced to the status of a prisoner and the holy places wrested from his control. This outrage on the position of the Khalifa grievously offended the Indian Muslims and other communities in India who rightly considered it as betrayal by the British Prime Minister. Muslims were in a ferment and a Khilafat Committee was formed to take necessary measures to save the Khilafat. The first Conference was held on 23 November 1919 in Delhi and was attended by Mahatma Gandhi, who advocated non-cooperation as a remedy. Again at Amritsar the Committee met along with the Congress and decided to send a deputation to Viceroy and the British Premier to present their views. The deputation waited on the Viceroy and impressed on him "the necessity for the preservation of the Turkish Empire and of the sovereignty of the Sultan as Khalifa" and laid stress on the principle "that the continued existence of the Khilafat as a temporal no less than spiritual institution was the very essence of their faith". The response of the Viceroy was not re-assuring and evoked a statement from Muslim leaders that "should the peace terms result unfavourably to Muslim religion and sentiments, they would place an undue strain upon Muslim loyalty". They demanded that Arabia and the Holy Places must remain under Khalif's control. Another manifesto was also published declaring that "any reduction of the claim would not only be a violation of the deepest religious feelings of the Muslims, but also a

flagrant violation of the solemn declarations and pledges made or given by responsible statesmen, representing the Allied and Associated Powers and given at a time when they were desirous of enlisting the support of the Muslim people and soldiery". Any adverse decision, it was affirmed, would have serious consequences as the Hindus had joined the Muslims in their hour of trial. The reaction of the Secretary of State for India and Lloyd George to this request was extremely unfavourable and the peace terms struck a blow to the integrity of Turkey and the temporal as well as religious supremacy of the Sultan, who was subsequently deposed by Mustafa Kamal Pasha, and the Arabian lands were parcelled out and the Holy Places left under the sovereignty of Sharif Hussain. Thus arose the Khilafat question and the Khilafat Committee adopted the programme of non-cooperation on 28 May 1920. About the same time Hunter Committee Report on the cruel happenings in Panjab was published and the All-India Congress Committee on 30 May 1920 decided to hold a special session of the Congress to consider the question of non-cooperation as the means of redressing grievance and winning Swaraj.

Soon after the publication of the Rowlatt Committee report the Government of India introduced a Bill in the Legislative Council which, despite the unanimous opposition of Indian members, and without allowing the public opinion to discuss it, adopted it on 3 March 1919. The new law was intended to perpetuate the Defence of India Act, which had only a temporary effect during the war, and enable the government to expedite trial of offences of a revolutionary character by a special court consisting of three High Court Judges. There was also power to order persons suspected to be involved in movements likely to lead to the commission of offences against the state to furnish security, to reside in a particular place and abstain from any specified act. The Local Governments were also empowered to detain persons believed to be connected with certain offences, threatening public peace, and keep them in detention indefinitely. Possession of seditious documents with the intention to publish them, was made punishable with imprisonment. These were wide powers given to an irresponsible government, acting almost autocratically at a time when the country was at

peace and naturally created the impression that the Rowlatt Act was aimed at scotching political movement for changes in the structure and nature of government. This caused universal resentment. Mahatma Gandhi had declared his intention on 24 February 1919 to lead a campaign of Satyagraha if the bill became a law, and had toured the country extensively to propagate his idea. Thus when the inevitable happened, he published a pledge on 18 March to the effect that "Being conscientiously of opinion that the Bills.....are unjust, subversive of the principles of Liberty and justice and destructive of the elementary rights of an individual on which the safety of India as a whole and the State itself is based, we solemnly affirm that in the event of these Bills becoming Law and until they are withdrawn, we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws and such other laws as the Committee, hereafter to be appointed, may think fit, and we further affirm that in the struggle we will follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property". The pledge was widely signed and Mahatma Gandhi inaugurated the movement by fixing 30 March 1919 as "a day of *Hartal*, fasting and prayer and penance, and meetings all over". The date was changed to 6 April but Delhi stuck to the previous date and people fasted, and processions and hartals were organised on a mass scale. The government countered it with force. European soldiers threatened to shoot the leader of the procession Swami Shraddhananda who bared his chest and "thus paralysed the threat". Shooting occurred leading to some deaths and many casualties. In the rest of the country demonstrations were held on 6 April, an important feature of which was fraternisation of Hindus and Muslims, the Hindu leaders being asked to address the people even in mosques. Here was a novel method of political action and caught the imagination of the people immediately, who were impressed by the purity and sincerity of the new leader and the spirituality of the movement, which was based on truth and non-violence.

It was in Panjab, however, that this movement met with vehement opposition from the government and a crisis of immense magnitude was created. The war had greater impact on this province than elsewhere which suffered at the hands of

over-zealous officialdom seeking large recruitment of soldiers to feed the Indo-British army in the battle-fronts of Europe and West Asia as well as funds for the purpose of enhancing the War Loans. That excesses were committed and extreme pressure exercised cannot be denied, and its natural sequence was public resentment and feeling of discontent. Panjab was also exposed to anti-British propaganda by the Pan-Islamic pro-German agencies from beyond the frontiers. The establishment of Provisional Government of India by Raja Mehendra Pratap in Kabul aided by the Ghadar party followers in India also had encouraged seditious activities and shook the foundations of loyalty to the British. The state of the army just when the war ended added to the anxiety of authorities in Panjab. The British soldier was tired and longed to go home while the strength of British troops had gone down considerably. The Indian troops also had become politically-minded and were susceptible to attempts to "seduce them". The loyalty of some units was in doubt and "the idea that the Indian troops on several occasions had refused and would refuse to fire on crowd was present all over the country". Datt in his Introduction to "New Light on the Panjab Disturbances in 1919" has, on the basis of the Disorders Enquiry Committee Report, referred to "dangerous manifestation among troops in April", burning of military stores at Ambala, Lahore and Multan. At the same time attacks on railway communications and telegraphs were cause of anxiety to the government. The people were restive under the pressure used for recruitment and the manner in which Income Tax was assessed. Another factor which aggravated panic in government circles was the attitude of Amir Amanullah who, through his agent Ghulam Hyder Khan, Afghan Postmaster in Peshawar, succeeded in collecting facts about the revolutionary trends in India and wanted to synchronise his invasion of the frontier with the revolutionary outburst in India. All these led the British authorities to believe "that they were sitting on the edge of an abyss" and some of them were convinced that the story of 1857 was being repeated. Datt has analysed the state of mind of Panjab authorities that "the wreckage of railway lines, the burning of military stores and general railway strike, the shifting of loyalty of India troops,



Gandhi's plans to overthrow government and the impending Afghan attack on India" along with the smouldering disaffection in the army led to the conviction in the circle headed by Michael O'Dwyer and Dyer that if the Satyagraha movement fell into the hands of violent agitation then India would be plunged into a revolution and disturbances would no more be amenable to control by British authorities. However, Dutt has characterised it as unrealistic. Nonetheless the psychology which led to the reign of terror in April 1919 was produced by the conjuncture of such events.

The happenings in Delhi, naturally, had impact on the events in Panjab which followed. The government was keen to prevent demonstrations, which in its view might provoke rebellion among a people emotionally strung and seriously affected by anti-British feelings. The Lieutenant Governor, Sir Machael O'Dwyer, "was determined to prevent the contamination" of Panjab by "the spread of the Congress movement", and took action against Kitchlew and Satyapal, who were then responsible for convening the Congress Session at the end of December in Amritsar. On 4 April they were prohibited from addressing meetings or writing to the press, and on the 9th, O'Dwyer ordered their deportation to Dharamshala which was executed on the 10th, when the District Magistrate called them to his bungalow and whisked them away. The news of the sudden arrest and disappearance of their beloved leaders drove the people of Amritsar into a frenzy and they moved towards the residence of the officer to seek release of their leaders. On the way the police held them on the railway bridge, which being defied led to firing by the police and violence by the mob. Five Europeans were killed, two banks and the railway godown were burnt, an English teacher, Miss Sherwood, was severely beaten by the crowd enraged by police firing which had resulted in some people being dead or wounded. Amritsar was then given over to military authorities and General Dyer took over charge on the 11th. Next day the troops paraded the streets to create fear and proclamations were issued prohibiting meetings and assemblage of people. On 13 April, as a protest, a meeting was called at Jalianwala Bagh in the afternoon and from fifteen to twentyfive thousand

people assembled there. This news infuriated Dyer who proceeded there with about 100 Gurkha troops and an armoured car, and without warning ordered firing. 1600 rounds were fired killing many hundreds of persons and wounding a much larger number. Dyer stopped firing only when the ammunition was exhausted and he was unrepentant for his action, rather felt jubilant that he had broken the will to revolt. His action had the unreserved approval of O'Dwyer and the British community. Meanwhile in Lahore processions were fired upon, beloved leaders, Ram Bhaj Dutt Chowdhury, Harkishan Lal and Duni Chand deported, and hartals broken. The wave of violence spread to Kasur and Gujranwala where railway station was burned, and railway bridges damaged, trains attacked and stones hurled on the police. These incidents led to the declaration of martial law with the army taking over control and indulging in unprecedented atrocities on the people and humiliating them. Students were singled out for rough treatment, and in the street of Amritsar where Miss Sherwood had been assaulted, every passerby, irrespective of his age or status, was compelled to crawl on all fours for a distance of more than 200 yards. In the words of Dr. Tara Chand, "The martial law regime from 15th of April to 29th of May was a horrid tale of atrocious dealings—commandeering of transport, stopping of free distribution of food to the needy, convictions by summary courts, imprisonment, stripes, public flogging, marching students 16 miles a day in the hot midday sun of May, etc...The English officials—civil and military, appeared on the stage in their true colour, with the veneer of civilization suddenly scrubbed out. They were gripped by fear, scared by shadows, and behaved like animals at bay, ferocious and blood-thirsty". O'Dwyer and his merridons "exhibited no sense of shame or remorse" in relating their misdeeds before the Commission of Enquiry. Misery was thrust upon the people of Panjab so that they were cowed down at a time when Amanullah invaded Indian frontiers in July 1919. Panjab was so isolated that the news of this tragedy only trickled to the rest of India long afterwards and even then its magnitude was not known to the people of other provinces. When the news percolated outside, "India was convulsed" and there was an

outburst of condemnation from every side. Demands were made for the recall of O'Dwyer and Chelmsford, punishment of Dyer and other administrators of martial law and release of prisoners.

Montagu realised the wrong that was done, for he was conscious of the danger in continuing the method of terrorism and ruling by the sword. His entire scheme of reforms was at stake, therefore, he promised to hold an enquiry in his Budget Speech on May 22, 1919. This was repeated by Lord Sinha in the House of Lords on August 6, and, despite the vehement opposition of the Government of India, a Committee of Enquiry was appointed in October under the chairmanship of Lord Hunter with four English men and three Indian members submitting a separate dissenting report. The majority report characterised the disturbances as a rebellion, inclining towards revolution, outbreaks organised and inter-connected. It justified proclamation of martial law and firing as necessary to put down the mob excesses. Only Dyer's action was criticised as a "mistaken conception of duty", but the Government of India was held to be blameless. The minority report disagreed with the first two findings of the majority, but justified firing. However, it condemned the nature of punishments which were "intended to terrorise and humiliate people". The Congress report held Michael O'Dwyer guilty of oppressive conduct in the matter of recruitment and felt that he "invited violence from the people so that he could crush them and that he subjected them to provocation so that they lost self-control." The Committee definitely negated the idea of conspiracy to overthrow British rule and failed to find any reason for the promulgation of martial law. In its view the Jallianwala Bagh "massacre was a calculated piece of inhumanity towards utterly innocent and unarmed men including children, and unparalleled for its ferocity in the history of modern British administration". Both these reports were published early in 1920. Dyer was cashiered, his action was condemned by a majority in the House of Commons, but the House of Lords vindicated him by a majority vote. A huge fund was raised in England and the money with a sword was presented to him as "a mark of approbation of his services by his admirers". Earlier the

Government of India had passed an Indemnity Bill protecting the officers who were involved in the guilt of atrocity, approved of the policy of O'Dwyer and had refused permission to Gandhi and Andrews to enter Panjab. Meanwhile Mahatma Gandhi had suspended passive resistance owing to the outbreak of violence in Panjab, Gujarat and Bengal, and termed his action in giving a call for mass civil disobedience before people were qualified for it as a mistake of "Himalayan magnitude". The Panjab tragedy had greatly injured the sentiments of the people all over India and aggravated disaffection against British rule. The Indian public viewed with horror the perpetration of inquisitional medieval atrocities, and a wave of anguish and resentment submerged the country. Thus, as Dr. Tara Chand has written, "in 1919 the cup of misery was full to the brim. The important factors of unrest were the Martial Law in the Panjab and its punitive consequences, the defeat of Turkey and its apprehended dismemberment, the Montague-Chelmsford reforms and their unsatisfactory character, the economic ills following in the wake of a terrible war, the tremendous revolution in Russia with its explosive ideology". In this background the Congress met in Amritsar at the end of the year 1919.

Despite the shock of Panjab horrors and the inadequacy of the reformed constitution, the Congress exhibited cautiousness and the criticism of the government was moderate in tone. Tilak had wired his congratulations to the King for the Reform Bill and offered responsive cooperation. The old leadership had not yet completely broken away from the traditional moorings, though the younger element under the leadership of C.R. Das was vehement in its opposition. His resolution on the constitutional proposals reiterated the declaration that India was fit for "full Responsible Government" and repudiated "all assumptions and assertions to the contrary", termed the Reforms Act as "inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing", and called upon the Parliament "to establish full Responsible Government in accordance with the principle of Self-determination." Gandhi voiced the moderate view when he moved an amendment to omit the word "disappointing" from the resolution and to add a clause that "Pending such introduction this Congress begs loyally to respond to the sentiments in the

Royal Proclamation, namely, "Let the new era begin with a common determination among my people and my officers to work together for a common purpose, and trusts that both the authorities and the people will cooperate so to work the Reforms as to secure the early establishment of full Responsible Government." After prolonged debate, the resolution as passed, accepted the original draft of Das with a paragraph added accepting Gandhi's amendment in a modified form. It read, "Pending such introduction, this Congress trusts that, so far as may be possible, the people will so work the Reforms as to secure an early establishment of full Responsible Government, and the Congress offers its thanks to the Rt. Hon'ble E.S. Montagu for his labours in connection with the Reforms". Gandhi had not yet emerged as an uncompromising opponent of British connection and appeared, as Pattabhi Sitaramayya has put it, "as an apostle of cooperation." His triumph was evidenced in another resolution which he almost forced on the Congress, and notwithstanding the youthful sentiments to the contrary, condemned the violence exhibited by the people in Panjab and Gujarat. The resolution said "while fully recognizing the grave provocation that led to a sudden outburst of mob frenzy, expressed the deep regret of the Congress at, and its condemnation of, the excesses committed in certain parts of the Panjab and Gujarat resulting in the loss of lives and injury to person and property during the month of April last". Here was a new principle enunciated which affirmed full faith in truth and non-violence. He stated, "But the Government went mad at the time; we went mad also at the time, I say, do not return madness with madness, but return madness with sanity and the whole situation will be yours". Along with this emphasis on eschewing violence as a means of political action, the Congress, under Gandhi's inspiration adopted resolutions on Swadeshi, "recommending a revival of the ancient industry of hand spinning and hand-weaving", prohibition of spirituous liquors and drugs, amelioration of the grievances of third class passengers; gratitude to Muslims for recommending the discontinuance of cow-sacrifice at Bakrid; and protest at British action in the matter of the Khilafat. There was a resolution demanding recall of Viceroy Chelmsford and asking "for cancellation of

indemnities levied upon the people.” A resolution on Fundamental Rights was also adopted. Mahatma Gandhi was perhaps not yet prepared to break with the British empire and his faith in British sense of justice and love for democracy and liberty had not been completely shattered even by the naked display of selfish and aggressive imperialism. However, the events of 1919, British perfidy in the matter of Khilafat and their attempt to minimise the crime of Dyer, disillusioned him and transformed him into a rebel, advocating non-cooperation with what he called a ‘Satanic Government’.

Meanwhile the All-India Khilafat Conference had been formed, and Gandhi had suggested adoption of non-cooperation as a means for righting the wrong done the Muslims on the Turkish question. Consequent on the discussions at Amritsar, a deputation with Gandhi as one of its members waited on the Viceroy on January 19, 1920 only to receive a very unsatisfactory response. The Khilafat Conference met again on 20 February at Calcutta, and passed a resolution on non-cooperation, which was to be deferred pending the announcement of the terms of the treaty of Sevres, which was signed on 15 May. The treaty in its “harshness was excruciating for the Muslims”. The Khilafat Conference in its meeting of 28 May reiterated its decision to adopt what Gandhi called “the peaceful and infallible doctrine of non-cooperation”, as the only method which might “paralyse the mightiest government on earth.” The programme of non-cooperation was enunciated in June which was to be executed in four stages, namely, “(1) resignation of titles and honourary posts; (2) resignation of posts in the Civil Service of Government; (3) resignation of services in the Police and Army; (4) refusal to pay taxes”. In July Gandhi appealed to the Hindus to stand along with their Muslim brethren and withdraw association with the government, and he announced the date of August for the commencement of this movement. Meanwhile the Hunter Committee report had been published and the callousness with which Panjab tragic events were viewed and treated by the British public, added a fresh cause for non-cooperation. Mahatma Gandhi similarly believed that Hindu-Muslim unity was a pre-essential for India’s independence and therefore called upon the Hindus “to share

the sufferings and trials of fellow Indians. If I deem the Mohammadan to be my brother, it is my duty to help him in his hour of trial to the best of my ability, if his cause commends itself to me as just". He was convinced that the Khilafat question offered an opportunity for united action, and prove that the Muslim was the brother of the Hindu, "which would not recur for another hundred years." In recent years, and influenced by the events following the withdrawal of non-cooperation, many critics have questioned the wisdom of Gandhi's adoption of the Khilafat issue and invoking Hindu association with it. But one has to view it in the background of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy and the situation in which a call for unity was made. Gandhiji believed it a sin to put up with breach of faith which the attitude adopted by the British Government implied. To him cooperation with sin was tantamount to perpetration of sinful acts. He wrote, "It is just my sense of moral responsibilities which has made me take up the Khilafat question and to identify myself entirely with the Mohammadans. It is perfectly true that I am assisting and countenancing the union between Hindus and Moslems." The participation of the Muslims in the Rowlatt Act agitation, their sufferings in Panjab equally with the Hindus and absolute necessity of combined action in the struggle for Swaraj convinced him of the inevitability of fraternisation between the two communities. "Human sympathy" and "moral conscience" made it imperative that Hindus should support Muslim demands, for, in his view, in the words of Dr. Tara Chand, "it would be a poor conception of patriotism if one section of the nation failed to come to the aid of the other in the hour of its need."

The non-cooperation movement was begun on 1 August with the renunciation of titles and other decorations. Gandhiji returned his Kaiser-i-Hind and gold medals, bestowed upon him by the British Government. But to consider the entire question of Khilafat and Panjab wrongs a special session of the Congress was summoned to meet in Calcutta in September 1920 from 4th to 9th, for the renunciation of the old path of constitutional agitation was a big issue which required consideration by a special session of the Congress. The opinion of the

various provincial Congress Committees on non-cooperation had been invited, Mahatma Gandhi had toured the country eliciting popular response to the new programme. With these preliminaries completed the Congress deliberated on the new programme of action and expressed itself on the resolution which was placed by Gandhiji before it. After recounting the wrong done by the British to the Muslims on the Khilafat question, and affirming "the duty of every non-Muslim Indian in every legitimate manner to assist his Muslim brother, and charging the government of gross neglect and failure to protect the innocent Indians from official callousness Parliamentary lack of sympathy for Indians, in the tragic events in Panjab and entire absence of repentance in the matters of the Khilafat and the Panjab"; the Congress expressed the "opinion that there can be no contentment in India without redress of the two above-mentioned wrongs, and that the only effectual means to vindicate national honour and to prevent a repetition of similar wrongs in future is the establishment of Swarajya." Therefore, "there is no course left open to the people of India but to approve of and adopt the policy of progressive non-violent Non-Cooperation inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi, until the said wrongs are righted and Swarajya is established." The rest of the resolution spelt out the mode of operation. The programme was such as might cause least of strain on the general public but effective enough to express dissociation of the people with a government which had forfeited its right to share their affection and co-operation. The movement was to begin initially with "the classes who have hitherto moulded and represented public opinion". And "inasmuch as the Government consolidates its power through titles and honours bestowed on the people, through schools controlled by it, its Law Courts and its Legislative Councils", and because initially "least sacrifice" was demanded, there was demand for (1) surrender of titles and honours and resignation from Local Bodies, (2) refusal to attend levees, Darbars and other official or semi-official functions held in honour of government officials, (3) gradual boycott of government or aided schools and colleges and establishing national educational institutions, (4) gradual boycott of law courts by lawyers and litigants and



establishment of private courts of arbitration; (5) refusal by military, clerical and labouring classes to offer themselves for recruitment for service in Mesopotamia, and (6) boycott of the reformed legislative councils by electors and candidates, and (7) boycott of foreign goods. In this context the resolution advised adoption of Swadeshi and promotion on a large scale of hand-spinning and hand-weaving to augment the supply of indigenous cloth. This was "conceived as a measure of discipline and self-sacrifice", the first essentials for national progress. After long discussion and despite opposition of C.R. Das and other leaders, Mahatma Gandhi's resolution was adopted by a majority of nearly a thousand votes. But at the annual session of Congress at Nagpur in December 1920 which had the unprecedented gathering of 14582 delegates, the non-cooperation resolution was passed unanimously, the weavers of Bengal and Maharashtra being converted to the new faith vehemently supported the new principle.

Initially Mahatma Gandhi had propounded the creed of non-violent non-cooperation to redress the Panjab wrongs and the Khilafat issue; but on the advice of Motilal Nehru and some other senior leaders included attainment of Swaraj as one of the purposes for which the new movement of non-cooperation was to be launched. In the six months before the Nagpur session of the Congress, considerable success had been registered in the implementation of various items and the people's mind was prepared for the sacrifices involved. The people were enthusiastic about it and it was this force which facilitated the adoption of full-fledged non-cooperation by the Nagpur Congress. The ratification of the resolution was accompanied by a preamble which made the programme fully comprehensive. It said, "Whereas in the opinion of the Congress the existing Government of India has forfeited the confidence of the country, and the people of India are determined to establish swaraj, as all methods hitherto adopted by the people of India failed to secure due recognition of their rights and liberties and the redress of their many and grievous wrongs, more specially in reference to the Khilafat and the Panjab, now this Congress while re-affirming the resolution of non-violent non-cooperation, declares that the entire or any part of the non-violent

non-cooperation scheme, with the renunciation of voluntary association with the Government at one end, and the refusal to pay the taxes at the other, should be put in force at a time determined by either the Indian National Congress or the All-India Congress Committee; and that, in the meanwhile, in order to prepare the country for it, effective steps should be taken in that behalf". Thus was initiated the non-cooperation movement in its fulness, beginning with the surrender of honours and culminating in the refusal to pay taxes. There was to be a total withdrawal of association and cooperation with the foreign government, which alone were the foundation and stable support of any government. In addition to this main resolution, other matters disposed by the Congress were Hindu-Muslim Unity, removal of untouchability, promotion of Khadi, formation of a corps of national workers, raising of a fund of rupees one crore for the Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund. Thus the content of the programme and its logistics in terms of personnel and finances were clearly defined. Mahatma Gandhi set a one year limit to the attainment of Swaraj if there was response from the people in fully implementing its items and maintaining the spirit of complete non-violence.

Before we proceed with the analysis of the results achieved, it may be pertinent here to examine the philosophy and principles which underlay the non-cooperation movement. The entire concept of non-cooperation was based on the notion that cooperation with evil is sinful and that its removal was possible by non-violence. To Mahatma Gandhi the system of government in India was "satanic even as was the system under Ravana's rule", and he emphasised the "supreme necessity of ending this rule, unless the system undergoes a radical change and there is definite repentance on the part of the rulers". Ending of vicious rule and generating the feeling of repentance in the rulers for all they had perpetrated were essential elements of his programme. The mode of violence was the traditional method but he rejected it both on grounds of expediency and morality. In his view "non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute". Defining his non-violence he wrote; "It is not a resignation from all real fighting against wickedness. On the contrary the non-violence of my conception

is a move active and more real fighting against wickedness than retaliation whose very nature is to impose wickedness. I contemplate a mental, and, therefore, a moral, opposition to immorality. seek entirely to blunt the edge of the tyrant's sword, not by putting up against it a sharper edged weapon, but by disappointing his expectation that I should be offering physical resistance. The resistance of the soul that I should offer instead would elude him. It would at first dazzle him, and at last compel recognition from him, which recognition would not humiliate him but would uplift him". His non-violence was no cover for cowardice, it was the weapon of the strong, a supreme virtue of the brave. He wrote, "cowardice is wholly inconsistent with non-violence...It is a conscious deliberate restraint upon one's desire for vengeance...Non-resistance is restraint voluntarily undertaken for the good of society". In his appeal to every Englishman in India, published in *Young India* on 27 October 1920, he wrote that the people had been made powerless to fight and "bravery on the battle field is thus impossible for us. Bravery of the soul still remains open to us. I know you will respond to that also. I am engaged in evoking that bravery. Non-cooperation means nothing less than training in self-sacrifice." At another place he depreciated cowardice and wrote, "where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence," for as he said, "I would rather risk violence a thousand times than risk the emasculation of a whole race". However, to him "non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment. Forgiveness adorns a soldier. But abstinence is forgiveness only when there is power to punish, it is meaningless when it pretends to proceed from a helpless creature". Thus he invoked "the strength of the spirit" and placed before the people "the ancient law of self-sacrifice. for satyagraha and its offshoots, non-cooperation and civil resistance, are nothing but new names for the law of suffering... Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant". To Gandhiji non-violence was religion, and he advocated its adoption by India as "she has a mission

for the world". In his philosophy, the main task was to convert the evil-doer to accept truth and thus ennoble himself. He believed that conscious suffering for a cause enlivens the conscience and enables the tyrant to do justice.

The basic principle of non-cooperation or satyagraha was thus rigid adherence to non-violence. In his statement as president of the Home Rule League in March 1920, he had most unequivocally enunciated the principle of non-violent non-cooperation. In case of refusal to grant the demands relating to Khilafat and Panjab, he wrote, "The barbarous method is warfare, open or secret. This must be ruled out, if only because it is impracticable. If I could but persuade every one that it is always bad, we should gain all lawful ends much quicker. The power that an individual or a nation forswearing violence can generate, is a power that is irresistible. But my argument today against violence is based upon pure expediency, its utter futility. It is the clearest remedy, as it is the most effective, when it is absolutely free from all violence. It becomes a duty when cooperation means degradation or humiliation or an injury to one's cherished religious sentiment." Gandhiji believed that "the peaceful and infallible doctrine of non-cooperation would "paralyse the mightiest government on earth". To him "non-cooperation is a duty when the government, instead of protecting robs you of your honour." Though he did not say so specifically, his admonition that "it is amazing as it is humiliating that less than a hundred thousand white men should be able to rule three hundred and fifteen million Indians", naturally led people to assume that once cooperation was withdrawn from the government, and as Brailsford puts it, they cease to recognise it, "to obey it, ignored its law courts, refused to pay its taxes and declined to serve it as soldiers and policemen, would it not collapse, helplessly and painlessly". Withdrawal of association would cripple imperialism, the satanic system. Non-cooperation, therefore, was "aimed at the overthrow of the Government". As long as people felt helpless and dependent upon the British for "internal and external security, for an armed peace between the Hindus and Musalmans, for our education and for the supply of daily wants, nay, even for the settlement of our religious

squabbles", foreign rule found its roots strongly embedded. But "to get swaraj, then, is to get rid of our helplessness". Further he termed Councils, law courts and honours as "subtle methods for emasculation". He emphasised that "the British cannot rule us by mere force. And so they resort to all means, honourable and dishonourable, in order to retain their hold on India. They want India's billions, and they want India's man-power for their imperialistic greed. If we refuse to supply them with men and money, we achieve our goal namely, swaraj, equality, manliness".

Non-cooperation was no mere political programme. Gandhiji called it a "religious movement designed to purge Indian political life of corruption, deceit, terrorism and the incubus of white supremacy". He told Reading, the Viceroy, that the "major task was to purify India"; the expulsion of England would be a mere by-product. For he believed that sacrifice wilfully undergone would move the stoniest heart. At the Ahmedabad Congress in 1921 he reminded the British Government that, "no matter what you do, no matter how you repress us, we shall one day wring reluctant repentance from you". But inherently a spiritual or moral experiment, non-cooperation was aimed deliberately at "the overthrow of the government" and thus "legally seditious". He wrote in *Young India* on 15 December 1921 that "Non-cooperators are at war with the government. They have declared rebellion against it", for, as he wrote later, there could be no "compromise whilst the British lion continues to shake his glory claws in our faces." The battle which he began in 1920 was, therefore, "a fight to the finish", irrespective of the time it may take. He defied the threat of 'hard fibre' of the British nation, uttered by Birkenhead and wrote "No empire intoxicated with red wine of power and plunder of weaker races has yet lived long in the world, and this British Empire, which is based upon organized exploitation of physically weaker races of the earth and upon a continuous exhibition of force cannot live if there is a just God ruling the universe". In the great trial in 1922, pleading guilty to the charge of disaffection against British rule, he charged the imperial government of exploiting the Indians and aggravating misery and poverty of the people.

He believed that when the cup of humiliation and spirit of helplessness is full to the brim, the nation giving "fullest expression to...disaffection" would resort to violence. He considered it to be a virtue "to be disaffected towards a Government which in its totality has done more harm to India than any previous system". The unnatural state in which India and England were placed might have erupted in violence, hence he rightly believed "that I have rendered a service to India and England by showing in non-cooperation the way out of that position. And he added, "non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good. But in the past non-cooperation has been deliberately expressed in violence to the evil-doer. I am endeavouring to show to my contrymen that violent non-cooperation only multiplies evil, and that as evil can only be sustained by violence, withdrawal of support of evil requires complete abstention from violence. Non-violence implies submission to the penalty for non-cooperation with evil." Non-cooperation was a moral duty when consciousness of evil had come about. It was the means of moral regeneration and making the nation powerful to resist evil from whatever source it might come. Non-violence was its essential counterpart, for without strict adherence to it the nation would lose its identity and be false to its culture. Non-cooperation, as a political instrument, was well calculated to blunt the edge of the strongest weapon of repression in the empire's arsenal. No government can subsist long without the willing response of the people and their active co-operation in the act of administration. Withdrawal of that cooperation would soon paralyse the mightiest empire, for no government could sit on the bayonets. Hence non-cooperation was intended to bend the British to the will of the Indian people, and if the full programme of non-cooperation was to be observed in spirit and letter by the people, Swaraj within a year promised by Gandhiji was not a mere dream.

To repeat, non-violence was the essential con-comitant of non-cooperation, for "in its dynamic condition it means conscious suffering". It was not "meek submission to the will of the evil-doer", but "pitting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant". Its essential purpose was to dissociate

from evil and by willing suffering, without any thought of retaliation, to convert the evil doer. There was absolute faith in the goodness of human nature and conviction that even the tyrannical heart would "melt at the sight of suffering and the scale of ignorance, selfishness and egoism will fall to enable virtue and justice to reveal themselves". Gandhiji pleaded for withdrawal of all support to government, irrespective of "losses and inconveniences" arising from such dissociation, till the British were "roused to a sense of inequity." Suffering was the sine-qua-non of weaning the ruler from wickedness, for without suffering attainment of freedom was impossible. He repeatedly insisted on non-violence for he wrote, "Let there be no manner of doubt that Swaraj established by non-violent means will be different from the Swaraj that can be established by armed rebellion". The programme of non-cooperation was in line with the earlier thinking of leaders like Aurobindo Ghosh and Tilak, the one basic difference was Gandhiji's vehement advocacy of non-violence. And the people took to the new creed with great enthusiasm and early response was tremendous. The Tilak Swaraj Fund was over-subscribed, lakhs of spinning wheels began plying in villages and towns, and a few millions of volunteers were recruited. Response from students leaving educational institutions was no less inspiring, though owing to lack of alternative schools and colleges, the number who left governmental institutions did not exceed thousands. Similar was the case with the lawyers, who for lack of employment could not relinquish practice in courts of law in very large numbers, though litigation had decreased and arbitration was growing popular. At the Council-entry front, however, the situation was quite encouraging. "Politicians of the moderate liberal school and sundry others had made up their minds to stand for the Councils", but the Congress abstained and voters in large numbers boycotted the polling booths. The Councils could not claim that they represented the people. However, boycott of foreign cloth made considerable headway and there was tremendous fall in the imports of piecegoods from Manchester and Lancashire. Swadeshi was popularised, particularly the hand-spun and hand-woven variety, providing employment to large numbers

of weavers who had lost their profession because of importation of British cloth. Psychologically, people in foreign dress felt a sense of shame and guilt. Bonfires of foreign cloth were a regular feature. Similarly the programme of boycott of intoxicant drinks and drugs also was successful, leading to loss of state revenue. This initial astounding success of the non-cooperation movement and absence of fear of jails and other varieties of punishment, even cruel in its ferocity, created alarm in bureaucratic minds and weapons, old and new, were sought in the arsenals of bureaucratic administration to quell the movement. Volunteer organisations were banned, picketting of cloth and liquor shops led to arrests, but the repressive legislation and brutal exhibition of the rage of maddened bureaucracy failed to break the spirit of the people. In November 1921, on the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales, both non-cooperation on its side, and repression on the side of the government were accelerated. The Ordinances and the amendments of the old punitive acts were clamped on the satyagrahis but without damping their enthusiasm. Gandhiji took up the programme of satyagraha on the issue of volunteers, and jails began to be crowded with the persons arrested. More than 30,000 satyagrahis, including a great many leaders, were jailed and the prison lost its terror. The boycott of Prince of Wales was successful and he saw empty streets, with closed shops wherever he went. Alongside of the aggressive part of non-cooperation the constructive programme of opening national institutions of education, formation of courts of arbitration and encouragement of village industries marked by the promotion of hand-spinning and hand weaving, the so called Khaddar programme was taken in hand with all the earnestness. The country was preparing itself for effective satyagraha involving refusal to pay taxes and Bardoli in Gujarat was chosen as the ground for experiment. Guntur and a few other places were also ready to adopt this extreme step. Thus at the close of 1921 non-cooperation had outstepped its first stage and the country was ready to launch on satyagraha.

The Congress met at Ahmadabad in the last week of December 1921. Efforts were made, before the visit of Prince of Wales to Calcutta, for some understanding between the



Government and the people, but the Viceroy was not prepared to accept the terms demanded by Gandhiji and the Congress leaders. Release of prisoners under the new law banning the volunteer organisations, as also those of the Muslim leaders who had preached withdrawal from military service, and the right of picketing foreign cloth and liquor shops were not accepted by the Viceroy and the boycott of the prince's visit was complete. There was stir in the country and people, in their enthusiasm, demanded commencement of civil disobedience. The Congress in its main resolution affirmed its "fixed determination...to continue the programme of non-violent non-cooperation with greater vigour", and exhorted the people "to offer themselves for arrest by belonging to the volunteer organisations". This was the first step in civil disobedience which now superseded the earlier mild programme. The Congress, therefore, stressed its "opinion that Civil Disobedience is the only civilised and effective substitute for an armed rebellion whenever every other remedy for preventing arbitrary tyrannical and emasculating use of authority by individuals or corporations has been tried and therefore advises all Congress workers and others who believe in peaceful methods and are convinced that there is no remedy, save some kind of sacrifice, to dislodge the existing Government from its position of perfect irresponsibility to the people of India, to organise individual Civil Disobedience and mass Civil Disobedience when the mass of people have been sufficiently trained in the methods of non-violence..." Gandhiji was appointed as the sole executive authority for implementing the programme. There was to be no slackness, however, in the boycotts, but the eyes of the country were now turned to the new drama which was expected to open in the new year. True to his creed of satyagrahi, Gandhiji informed the Viceroy of his resolve to organise no-tax campaign in Bardoli taluka in Gujarat. In his letter of February 1, 1922, he referred to "repression of violent type" pursued by the government and termed it "lawless repression". He denounced wholesale suppression of peaceful volunteering, interference with the liberty of the press and other barbarous methods of denying liberty of expression to people. Hence, he noted, "the immediate task before the country...is to rescue from paralysis

freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of Press". Owing to the attitude of the government, therefore, the only course open to the people was to adopt mass Civil Disobedience which in the face of "lawless repression" had become "an imperative duty". But it was to be confined to Bardoli and Guntur, if considered necessary. In case the Viceroy was prepared within seven days to revise his policy and set free all non-cooperators, declare non-interference with non-violent activities and free the press from all administrative control and restore all the fines and forfeitures imposed upon it, the "Civil Disobedience of an aggressive character" would be deferred for the time-being. The Government of India justified their repressive policy and emphasised their right to enforce law. The Viceroy was also not prepared to summon a Round Table Conference suggested by the All-Parties Conference seeking for a truce. Hence there was no alternative left but that of Civil Disobedience in Bardoli which was to be conducted under the direct control of Gandhiji.

But before the ball was set rolling, the ugly exhibition of mob violence in Chauri Chaura, a village in eastern Uttar Pradesh, where twentytwo policemen were burnt alive in their station, compelled Mahatma Gandhi to "scrap the plan of mass campaign" and retract the ultimatum given to the Viceroy. The Congress Working Committee at its meeting on 12 February 1922, under pressure accepted his advice to cancel the programme of mass civil disobedience and adopt the constructive programme of spinning, temperance, and educational activities. Gandhiji went on a fast of five days as a penance. As a true votary of non-violence, he realised that the atmosphere was not free from violence which was exhibited in Bombay and Madras on the occasion of Prince's visit. On February 16, in an article in Young India he wrote "that there is not yet in India that non-violent and truthful atmosphere which alone can justify mass civil disobedience". His action in stopping the movement came on a great shock to the Congress. Moti Lal Nehru and Lala Lajpat Rai sent angry letters from the prison "protesting against his decision". Jawaharlal was no less pained. Gandhiji's letter to him gave instances of people growing "aggressive, defiant and threatening".

Reports from many towns in the north showed that people "were getting out of hand and were not non-violent in demeanour". "With all this news in my possession...the Chauri Chaura news came like a powerful match to ignite the gunpowder, and there was a blaze. I assure you that if the thing had not been suspended we would have been leading not a non-violent struggle but essentially a violent struggle". He admitted that the spirit of non-violence was "spreading little the scent of the otto of roses...but the foetid smell of violence is still powerful, and it would be unwise to ignore or underrate it. The cause will prosper by this retreat" Hence he insisted on preparation for non-violence which was to be carried on by a accepting a programme of constructive work. It was to consist of the enlisting of one crore of members for the Congress, popularising of the spinning wheel, organising national schools, temperance and panchayats. To this was added picketting of foreign cloth, and then All India Congress Committee permitted individual civil disobedience and "reiterated its faith in Civil Disobedience and considered that an atmosphere of necessary non-violence could be established by workers concentrating upon the constructive programme". Thus ended one episode and the non-cooperation of aggressive type was discontinued. The criticism of Gandhiji and the sense of disappointment which gripped the Congressmen emboldened the government to arrest Mahatma Gandhi, who after a trial was awarded a term of six years imprisonment for preaching sedition.

In the Great Trial, Gandhiji pleaded guilty to the charge of disaffection for, as he told the Court, "I hold it to be a virtue to be disaffected towards a government which in its totality has done more harm to India than any previous system". He was taken to Yarwada Jail, and the people showed greatest restraint in keeping to the path of non-violence. The All India Congress Committee met at Lucknow on June 7, 1922, and took note of the severity of governmental repression. It expressed the opinion that despite suspension of all aggressive activities, it might be necessary to resort to civil disobedience to enable the country to enforce its demands. A committee known as the Civil Disobedience Inquiry Committee was appointed to report on the political situation in the country. It reported at the

end of October that civil disobedience was "impractical for the present", and half of its members advised its abandonment and as an alternative suggested that "a new party be formed to work in the councils". In their view abstention from the Councils had lost its charm and its continuance would react adversely on the interests of the people. The All India Congress Committee in November, resolved that "the country was not prepared for mass disobedience", but deferred other matters like council entry and the boycotts for decision at the annual session. The Congress met at Gaya where President Chittaranjan Das, advocated council entry for the purpose of obstructing the functioning of government by opposing all its measures. But if it failed to achieve the desired end, the Congress might fall back upon civil disobedience. The majority in the Congress, however, did not support Council entry, but called for more vigorous boycotts and preparation for civil disobedience. The refusal to endorse Council entry programme led to resignation of Das and some others, and formation of the Swaraj party. It was a revolt against the non-changers who religiously adhered to the constructive programme outlined by Gandhiji. In May 1923, however, at the special session of the Congress held in Delhi, permission was accorded to those who had no religious or conscientious objection to stand for election and the propaganda against council entry was suspended. Thus with the passive connivance of the Congress, the Swaraj Party entered the election fray and gained remarkable success in many provinces and was the biggest party in the Legislative Council at the Centre. For some time, the attention of the country was diverted to the Councils.

It may be pertinent at this stage to evaluate the contribution of the non-cooperation movement and to estimate the effect of its withdrawal on the progress towards the national goal. Subhash Chandra Bose had termed the "retreat when public enthusiasm was reaching boiling point" as "nothing short of a national calamity." So also did other leaders characterise it as a grave blunder and harmful to the cause. But Gandhiji's justification of his action was on grounds other than mere temporary political gain or loss. He wrote, "I know that the drastic reversal of practically the whole of aggressive pro-

gramme may be politically unsound and unwise, but there is no doubt that it is religiously sound". His critics viewed it mainly from the political angle and the pressure which might have been exerted on the British Government. There is no doubt that the popular response to the appeal for non-cooperation and the prospect of civil disobedience had affected the rulers of Whitehall, and the intensity of repression was their first reaction. Hence the suspension of militant programme which was fondly believed to be productive of quicker dividends was deplored and resented by leaders whose sole angle of vision was dominated by political considerations. But Gandhiji's approach was essentially moral and spiritual, and as one who held to non-violence as a creed, even the least trace of violence was wrong and sinful. From the practical point of view, also, his prescience was faultless, as he rightly believed that a violent movement would afford to the British a clear opening to crush the rising spirit which would give a stunning blow to the success of freedom movement in the future also. Violence was bound to injure the future build-up of the nation, while being morally wrong. Immediately also, the symptoms of growing violence had the effect of disintegrating political life. His insistence, therefore, on constructive programme was aimed at closing the fissures in national life and building up the moral stamina of the people to meet repression, and continue on the path of national freedom. The non-cooperation movement had introduced a new technique of political struggle and had prepared the people for non-violent revolt. Satyagraha had engendered consciousness of strength, self-reliance and spirit of sacrifice. It had prepared the nation to shed off all fear and jails had lost all terror. Deliberate violation of unwholesome laws for the cause of freedom and courting punishment volitionally was a new feature, for even though harsher sentences had been earlier imposed on the patriots they were not generally wilfully courted, and the general mass of the people had not shed their fear. But the heroism shown by the common man and the limit to which he could endure harshest punishment and inhuman oppression of the alien rulers, during the days of non-cooperation, was an unprecedented demonstration of the

courage, heroism and fearlessness of the people. The spirit of defying acts of alien government was a novel model of political operation. The entire programme, from the resignation of title, withdrawal of association from governmental institutions to wilful disobedience of laws and even non-payment of taxes were new instruments of political struggle, which the government nourished on the employment of organised violence had no weapons to combat. The first round might have been lost, but it was a fight between two wills—"the will to freedom and the will to dominate", the pitting of "soul force" against "material force." As the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Report pointed out, the gains were "the general awakening of the masses to their political rights, and privileges, the total loss of faith in the present system of Government, the belief that it was only through their own efforts that Indians could hope to be free; faith in the Congress...and the utter failure of repression to cow down the people". Political ideas, heretofore, the monopoly of a limited section of intellectual classes spread among the mass of the people and disturbed "their placid content." At the same time the self-complacency and equanimity of the rulers was also disturbed.

By the end of 1923, split was evident in the Congress, the Swarajists, or pro-changers had taken to the programme of council entry and gained phenomenal success in the elections, while the 'no changers' clung to the constructive programme. Delhi and Coconada Congresses had declared against propaganda hostile to the Swarajists, but the atmosphere was not free from mutual recrimination. Meanwhile Mahatma Gandhi had an attack of appendicitis on 12 January, 1924 and was operated upon and released from prison on grounds of health on February 5. For convalescence he stayed at Juhu, a seaside resort near Bombay. There in May, Motilal Nehru and Chittaranjan Das met him and an earliest effort was made to achieve some common ground between the two wings and gain Gandhi's blessings for the new enterprise. But he was unable to see eye to eye with his valued colleagues, though a compromise was reached and the Swarajists were permitted to prosecute their programme. In his statement Gandhiji reiterated his view that "Council entry is inconsistent with non-coopera-

tion as I conceive it", for the difference was one of "mental attitude". In view of the Congress resolutions he justified entering the legislative bodies and enjoined perfect neutrality on the part of the no-changers. Hence while being unable to help them he would place no obstacles in their way. In that context he also laid down lines on which the Swarajists might work, and enjoined on them "without following a general policy of obstruction, endeavour to give strength to the constructive programmes of the Congress". He desired them to move resolutions demanding that the cloth purchases of the government should be confined to hand-spun, hand woven Khaddar, imposing prohibitive duty on foreign cloth and abolishing drink and drug revenue. If the government failed to honour the verdict of the legislature, the Swarajists were to seek dissolution of the Council, or failing that to resign their seats and prepare the country for civil disobedience. To the no-changers he exhorted to push the constructive programme with vigour and hoped that the two wings of the Congress organisation would work in union in the country. Nehru and Das, in their statement, explained their position and thereby clearly outlined the policy and programme of the Swarajist party. In their view council-entry was "thoroughly consistent with the principle of non-cooperation." They explained that their work would be "that of resistance to the obstruction placed in our path to Swaraj by the bureaucratic government", and the removal of such obstruction formed the main plank of their programme in the Councils, which they "described as a policy of uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction." Within the Councils, they would "throw out budgets unless and until the system of government is altered in recognition of our rights or as a matter of settlement between Parliament and the people of this country". Secondly all "proposals for legislative enactment" intended to consolidate the power of the bureaucracy would be defeated. They would move bills, resolutions and measures "for the healthy growth of the nation", and support economic measures aimed at preventing the "drain of public wealth from India". While pursuing this line of action within the Councils, the Swarajist leaders pledged their whole hearted support to the constructive programme and to work it,

unitedly with the entire Congress organisation. Also they endorsed the suggestion of Mahatma Gandhi regarding civil disobedience and assured him "that the moment we find that it is impossible to meet the selfish obstinacy of the bureaucracy without Civil Disobedience, we will retire from the legislative bodies and help him to prepare the country for Civil Disobedience and unreservedly work under his guidance". Also labour problems and peasant organisations were assured of their active support. This arrangement was endorsed by the All India Congress Committee and finally the Congress at Belgaum in 1924. Thus was avoided a schism by adopting the two-pronged plan of operation, obstruction within the legislatures to wreck the hated constitution, and constructive programme outside to weld national unity and strengthen the will of the people for winning swaraj by sacrifice.

The Swarajist experiment was carried on for nearly five years with varying success, and the fire-works displayed in the Councils kept up public interest at a high pitch and helped to check the depression which would inevitably have gripped the popular mind on the withdrawal of non-cooperation. Swarajists achieved great success in the elections of 1923. Out of 105 elected members, 47 belonged to this party in the central legislature. However, their victory in the provincial councils was more remarkable. In Bengal and the Central Provinces they had absolute majority, and it was possible for them, unaided by other non-official elements, to paralyse the dyarchic system of government. In Bombay and the United Provinces their representation was not inconsiderable, so was also the case with some other provinces. In Bengal, the Governor invited Das to take over the transferred wing of the government, which was naturally refused, and the tactics of obstruction were adopted in the form of rejection of the salaries of ministers and passing of resolutions for the repeal of repressive laws. So also in the Central Provinces, no-confidence motion against the ministers was adopted and the budget was thrown out. The result was the exercise of the emergency powers of certification of grants and resumption of transferred subjects by the executive councillors. In both these provinces the constitution was thus wrecked and its unworkability fully demonstra-



ted. But the main interest lay in Delhi, where the Swaraj Party under the leadership of Moti Lal Nehru was in a position to gain the cooperation of the Nationalist party under Jinnah and this combination was powerful enough to command a majority and defeat the government in matters of major import to the people. The annual budgets were opposed, demands for supplies refused or cut down substantially, and even the entire budget being thrown out, compelling the Viceroy to exercise his emergency power of certification. Not only was the public kept amused and enthused by the discomfiture of the government but the unworkability of the Constitution was fully demonstrated, and the real nature of the 1919 reforms exposed. Early in 1924, Nehru moved a resolution for an early revision of the Act of 1919, so as to secure for India full self-governing Dominion Status. The Government of India raised the handy bogey of communal discord and told the Assembly that full Dominion Status would mean entrusting "the interests of minorities in the hands of a majority". But the Assembly by 76 votes to 48 adopted Nehru's proposal demanding early steps to be taken "to establish full Responsible Government in India and for the said purpose to summon at an early date a representative Round Table Conference to recommend with due regard to the protection of the rights and interests of important minorities the scheme of a constitution for India", and to place the scheme so prepared before the Parliament for being "embodied in a statute". Of course it was an infructuous move but sufficient to expose the intentions of the foreign government, which resorted to the usual method of appointing a Committee with Sir Alexander Muddiman as its Chairman to investigate the difficulties inherent in the working of the 1919 Act and suggest remedies. Some other measures of beneficial nature to the Indians were moved such as the extension of protection to steel manufactured in India as recommended by the Tariff Board. And when the Muddiman Committee Report came up for discussion, Nehru's demand reiterating the summoning of a Round Table Conference was again adopted by a majority of votes.

But soon fissures were evident in the Swarajist Party and the happy combination of nationalist forces in the Central legislature was evaporating. Talks of cooperation were audible. Das

in his Faridpur speech had unequivocally affirmed that "provided some real responsibility is transferred to the people, there is no reason why we should not cooperate with the government. But two things are necessary—first there should be a change of heart; secondly, Swaraj in the fullest sense, must be guaranteed to us at once, to come automatically in the near future". He discerned change of heart and to test it wanted "(1) general amnesty of all political prisoners, (2) a guarantee of the fullest recognition of our right to the establishment of Swaraj within the Commonwealth in the near future, and in the meantime till Swaraj comes, a sure and sufficient foundation of such Swaraj should be laid at once, (3) we on our part should give some sort of understanding that we shall not, by word, deed or gesture, encourage revolutionary propaganda and that we shall make every effort to put an end to such a movement". There was emphasis on gradualness in the statement of Das. Nehru also expressed some similar gesture in the Assembly when he said that he did not ask "for responsible government to be handed over, as it were, tied up in a bundle. His party had come there to offer cooperation. If the Government would receive their cooperation, they would find that the Swarajists were their men. If not, the Swarajists would stand on their rights and continue to be non-cooperators". These sentiments were a far cry from the declared objective of consistent obstruction which was the creed of the Swaraj Party. Acceptance of membership of Committees, particularly of the Sken Committee by Moti Lal Nehru, election of Vithalbhai Patel as speaker and some other acts showed that the wind was turning in the direction of cooperation, and the climax came when Tambe accepted membership of the Executive Council in the Central Provinces. This incident occasioned bitter controversy, leading to his expulsion from the party and its split by the formation of the group of Responsivists under the leadership of Jayakar and Moonje, whose programme was to occupy "every place of power, initiative and responsibility and giving no quarter to the bureaucracy." The death of Chittaranjan Das, meanwhile, had withdrawn a person of intense magnetic charm, while Nehru's aristocratic arrogance had alienated the Nationalists under Jinnah. Thus in 1926, dark clouds were

hanging on the horizon and symptoms of the failure of Swarajist adventure were clearly visible. The All India Congress-Committee on 7 March had called upon the Swarajists, owing to the absence of any sign of cooperation from the government, to walk out of the legislatures as a protest. When the budget of 1926-27 was presented Nehru made a stirring statement warning the government that "There is no more use for us here. We go out into the country to seek the suffrage of the electorates once more. We do not give up the fight...We feel that we have no further use for the sham institutions, and the best we can do to vindicate the honour and self-respect of the nation is to get out of them and go back to the country for work. In the country we will try to devise those sanctions which alone can compel any Government to grant the demands of the people". Thus was proved the futility of the experiment of Council work, and while Swarajists continued the programme of "walking in" and "walking out", getting the sneering title of 'peripatetic patriots' and 'patriotism in locomotion' for some time, they had lost heavily in the elections and cleared the ground for more amenable leadership to carry on the council work, which yielded no dividends whatsoever. The vacuum, however, was removed when the British Government in 1928 announced the appointment of the so-called Simon Commission to review the constitutional progress made and recommend measures for future reform.

Another tragic development, stemming the onward flow of national movement which followed in the wake of the withdrawal of non-cooperation was the eruption of communal discord, resulting in serious riots all over the country. Mention has been made earlier of the estrangement of the Muslim elite and aristocratic elements, largely inspired by British bureaucracy, from the Congress, leading to the foundation of the Muslim League. Since the days of Syed Ahmad Khan, particularly the establishment of his Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, a wave of Muslim separatism from the main current of nationalism had been a feature of Indian politics. In the second decade of the present century, many events, both external and internal, had led to the emergence of a youthful nationalist section among the Muslims which, by

its dominance in the League, veered round its policies nearer to the Congress; and when the Khilafat question agitated Muslim sentiments, this nationalist element along with the theologian group, the Ulema mainly of Deoband, allied with the Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi to lead the non-cooperation movement against the British. Maulana Mohammad Ali and his elder brother Shaukat Ali were the right and left arm of Gandhiji, whose leadership kept the Muslims united with the Congress. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Abdul Bari, Hasrat Mohani and many others lent their whole-hearted support to the national cause. Jinnah with his essentially political and secular mind could not reconcile himself to a movement, spiritually oriented as the non-cooperation was and kept aloof from it. But his nationalism operated as a strong force to strengthen the fight for freedom. However, when after the Montagu Declaration of August 1917, the Secretary of State toured India, fissiparous tendencies and divisive forces had found vent. Separate communal representation, sanctioned by the Lucknow Pact, had figured in the new constitution and provided field for exploitation of the separatist forces by the bureaucracy. Hence when, after Chauri Chaura, the civil disobedience was withdrawn and aggressive non-cooperation was discontinued, the Khilafatists took it as an act of desertion of their cause. Soon afterwards when the internal revolution in Turkey led to the complete overthrow of the Sultan, who was the Khalifa, and holy places were left to the authorities in Mecca, the entire foundation of the Khilafat movement was exploded, and the one uniting force which had held the two communities together and operated to exhibit unprecedented scenes of alliance had disappeared. At the same time Reading's display of sympathy for the Muslims, as expressed in the well-advertised support to the claims of Turkey, by the publication of 1922 despatch on Turkey, led many Muslims to assume that they could gain more through the goodwill of the government than by undergoing sacrifices called for by the Congress and the Khilafat Conference. The incarceration of Gandhiji also withdrew from the scene one who could command the loyalty of both the communities. And in that interval many factors aggravated communal tension

and gave birth to frequent riots which marred the history of the next five years.

The first ugly incidence of communal fury was the Moplah rising in Kerala in August 1921. Inhuman atrocities were committed on the Hindu population and some of them were converted as well. Economic forces and the rising tempo of political movement might have prompted the agrarian population to revolt against their immediate oppressors, and communal orgy might have been the consequence. However, the consequence was unfortunate and though the vigour of the non-cooperation movement prevented its evil effects to affect development elsewhere, yet the fact of communal dissension was a pointer to things which followed on the stoppage of the aggressive phase of the political movement. The riots were not so much caused by religious considerations, though outwardly their manifestation was religious. As Dr. Tara Chand has rightly pointed out "their real deep-seated cause was political. On the one side, there were anxieties about the future of the community, apprehensions concerning its status and doubts about its economic security; on the other side, the majority entertained fear of extra-territorial loyalties and pan-Islamic ambitions, which held out a threat to India's integrity and independence". The Lucknow Pact was a political arrangement and had brought about mutual accommodation for some years; but the constitutional provisions of 1919 had outpaced it and the special representation to the Muslims was more the gift of the ruling power than the result of a concordat between the two communities. When the prospect of responsible government glowed on the horizon, the minority communities grew apprehensive of the weight of numbers of the majority community and were keen to safeguard their future interests. Unfortunately this fact was ignored by the Hindus who entertained fears of pan-Islamism and saw danger to the independence of the country in the consolidation of power by Muslims in the north-western provinces where they formed a majority of population. The efforts at conciliation as expressed in the repeated unity conferences failed to attack the central fact and; while providing solutions for the symptoms, like music before mosque, cow-sacrifice and such other minor matters, did not

reach any agreement on the political status of the minority community and make due provision for sharing power. And naturally the Muslims, conscious of their glorious past and fearful of their future, threw themselves into the arms of the foreign rulers who were too prompt to give them patronage, and the bureaucracy did not hesitate to engineer conflicts.

The Hindus, on their side, were keen to assert their position and plug all holes through which insecurity might find vent. The Hindu Mahasabha, a product of these years, gained in popularity and with Madan Mohan Malviya, Lajpat Rai, Shradhdhanand and Jayakar "gravitating towards it" adopted the twin programme of Shuddhi (conversion) and sangathan (organisation). Both these items alarmed the Muslim, who in their turn took to Tabligh and Tanzim as corresponding counter-movements. Fazli Husain advocated "conversion of the Depressed Class Hindus to Islam. The Muslim Leaguers and Khilafatists took up the cry". The result was a series of riots in north India from Panjab to Bengal, and Bombay, and Hyderabad. The worst of these was in Kohat in the North-West Frontier Province on 9 and 10 September 1924, where from owing to "large scale killing and looting" the entire Hindu population was evacuated. This led later to estrangement between Gandhiji and the Ali Brothers whose diagnosis of the causes of the riot and the onus of responsibility differed widely, Mahatma Gandhi went on a twentyone days fast from September 18 to October 8, 1924, and to save his precious life, a Unity Conference was convened in Delhi to hammer a way out. The resolution merely called for "the utmost freedom of conscience and religion", and condemned "the desecration of places of worship, the persecution of those changing their faiths, and the use of compulsion for conversion". The members took a pledge to enforce these righteous principles and Gandhiji was persuaded to break his fast. But its effect was wholly ephemeral for the core of the problem had not been breeched, and "economic and political rights and privileges" had not been even broached. Later when the All-Parties Conference met at Bombay on November 21, Jinnah put forth certain concrete proposals, viz., representation of Muslims in the legislatures of Panjab and Bengal proportional to their

population in the two provinces, and decision about their share in the services. But the Conference failed to reach an agreement. Similarly the next meeting in January in Delhi proved equally infructuous. Mutual recriminations were frequently hurled by the leaders of the Muslim and Hindu organisations against each other. And there was no abatement in rioting, the worst of these was in Calcutta in April and May 1926. Then came the assassination of Swami Shraddhananda, and tribal participation in communal rioting on the frontier leading to exodus of Hindus from Peshawar. Not till the summer of 1928, when the appointment of Simon Commission was announced, and once again political movement gathered momentum was there any respite from communal crimes. To Gandhiji this orgy of communal frenzy was a great shock. In great agony he pleaded for change of heart between the two communities. He said, "Hitherto it has been a struggle and a yearning for a change of heart among the Englishmen who compose the Government of India. That change has still to come. The struggle for the moment must be transformed to a change of heart among Hindus and Musalmans. Before they think of freedom they must be brave enough to love one another, to tolerate one another's religion, even prejudices and superstitions, and to trust one another". But the situation continued to deteriorate, communal separatism aggravated, ultimately culminating in the division of India.

The adjournment of civil disobedience had also revived revolutionary activities which assumed certain magnitude in the Panjab. Bhagat Singh and his associates gave evidence of their existence by hurling a mock bomb in the hall of the Legislative Assembly and throwing leaflets. During the visit of Simon Commission to Lahore, Lala Lajpat Rai was deliberately chosen as a target of lathi charge, which led ultimately to his death. The revenge was taken by the revolutionaries by shooting Sandhurst, the police officer responsible for the crime. The people were losing faith in non-violence and idolising the leaders of seditious activities. All these developments, the futile experiment in the legislatures by the Swarajists, the Hindu-Muslim riots and general feeling of helplessness, led Mahatma Gandhi to devote his time and energy to the

preparation of the country for a fresh struggle with the bureaucracy and revitalising constructive programme. He detached himself from the Congress and wrote, "I must no longer stand in the way of Congress being developed and guided by educated Indian rather than by one like myself, who has thrown his lot entirely with the masses, and who has fundamental differences with the mind of educated India as a body. I still want to act upon them, but not leading the Congress. The best way in which I can help that activity is a removing myself out of the way and by concentrating myself solely upon constructive work". He toured the country constantly and worked for the removal of untouchability, promotion of Khaddar and unity among the people. Thus was prepared the stage for the next round of intense political activity leading to the Civil Disobedience in 1930.



## *Civil Disobedience*

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The first flush of non-co-operation movement met with encouraging response from the people and hopes rose high for victory, but the fact that a programme which was based on absolute non-violence was conducted without adequate discipline in the ways of non-violence led to its withdrawal by its author after the Chauri Chaura incident. In the vacuum produced by the sudden renunciation of active aggressive non-cooperation, two processes emerged. On the one side opinion was gathering strength in favour of taking the non-cooperation into the new legislatures and proving their ineffectiveness and the hollowness of the new reform scheme. The Swarajist Party, with the reluctant connivance of the Congress entered the Councils to effectively pursue their programme of destruction. But within a short period of three years, conscious of the futility of the move, this wing of the Congress withdrew from the legislatures ready to resume civil disobedience and prepare the country for it. During this interval the constructive programme signified by Khaddar, removal of untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity and temperance had made immense strides and the people had been stirred into a new consciousness of their strength by the constant tours of Mahatma Gandhi all over the land. The second development, ugly in its features and negative in character, was the erosion of the dam of Hindu-Muslim unity and the bursting of the flood of communal frenzy marked by rioting and hatred of each other. The fast of Gandhiji had temporarily stemmed this suicidal flow of communal discord, and efforts in the shape

of All Parties Conference were afoot to achieve some amicable settlement, but without success, and the chasm was widening between the two communities as religious differences were reinvigorated by political considerations. Nevertheless, in the seven years since the initiation of non-cooperation, the country had moved forward and symptoms of intense disaffection against the foreign government were prominently evident. There had been no change in the nature or spirit of bureaucratic authoritarianism and the British rulers were not prepared to part even with an iota of power to the people. The vision of responsible government leading to the status of a Dominion of the British Commonwealth, dimly perceptible in the Declaration of 1917, had got blurred. Yet economic forces, international developments or exigencies of British politics and the rising temper of Indian people, clamouring for Swaraj, demanded early solution of the tangle for delay would inevitably precipitate confrontation. The Council entry plan had also failed in its purpose and amply demonstrated the futility of constitutional methods, whether of the liberal or Swarajist variety, for wresting freedom from alien bureaucracy. Civil disobedience was the only alternative left and events were leading to it.

From the beginning constant pressure was put on the government to accelerate the process towards Swaraj. Within the legislature, as early as 1921, the Legislative Assembly adopted a resolution asking for "transference of full autonomy to the provinces and of all subjects except defence, foreign affairs and the political department to the central legislature." But at the moment the British Government "refused to entertain any revision or modification of the Act of 1919". Lloyd George and Montagu, despite their liberal professions, were opposed to any advance. Rather the Prime Minister declared "that Britain will in no circumstances relinquish her responsibility in India", and would not hesitate to take steps necessary to enforce it. His steel frame speech in which he could see no prospect of dispensing with the guidance of a small number of British Civil Servants, of British officials in India, as they were the steel frame on which the stability of administration and unity and peace of India depended, was characteristic of the temper of British Government. When Labour Party came to power in

1924 high hopes were entertained from the new government, as the party had earlier stood for self-government for India similar to that of Dominions of Canada, Australia, and South Africa. Ramsay Macdonald had even told his audience that "we will say to the Indians, your country is yours, your government is yours, and we shall seek your justification not in your continued subjection to us, but in your capacity for self-rule and self-government". But on taking office he fell into line with the old policy and did not hesitate to exploit the communal differences for denying the claim of India for self-government. However, the demand for early revision of the constitution was pressed in the Legislative Assembly here and, as related earlier, the proposal was made for a Round Table Conference, to frame the new Constitution. Government reaction did not change and it expressed its inability to recommend to Parliament acceptance of "immediate responsibility". They were not prepared to accelerate the appointment of a Royal Commission to enquire into the fitness of Indian people for greater autonomy before the lapse of ten years, as provided for in the statute of 1919. Again with the return of Conservatives into power, the same old arguments were repeated that India was not a nation, and could never be one to justify political advance. But developments in India, particularly in the sphere of legislatures, made Reading conscious of the immediacy of a gesture to appoint the Royal Commission two years before the expiry of the period of ten years, so as to "embarass the Swarajists" and "create a more favourable atmosphere for my successor." Reading wanted to do so before the Swarajists had moved a resolution and hail the appointment of the Commission as their victory. The Secretary of State was also veering round to this view so as not to leave its appointment to the Labour Government whose advent into power was imminent. The elections of 1926 brought back the Swarajists into the Assembly as the largest single group despite loss of numbers. Irwin the new Viceroy was conscious of the "ever rising claims of Indian nationalism", and supported the appointment of the Commission in 1927, but he was firmly set against the inclusion of any Indians in it. Thus finally the Cabinet decided on a seven member Commission with Sir John Simon as its Chairman and six other members of Parliament. No Indian was to be included

in it, but "means of association of Indians with the Commission to assist as assessors in the examination of witnesses and to deliberate with the members" were to be found in the appointment of a committee, which was given equal status, and its report was also presented to the Joint Committee of the two Houses of Parliament." The announcement was made on 8 November 1927, simultaneously by Secretary of State and the Viceroy.

The composition of the Commission with all white members was viewed by the people and politicians as an affront to the dignity of Indians. Their demand was for the right of self-determination which was unceremoniously brushed aside by entrusting the task of judging "whether the Indians were fit to govern themselves" to a body of "God's Englishmen." To this affront the Indians were not disposed to submit. Though the Commission was a committee of the Parliament entrusted with the task of reporting to it, the absence of even a single Indian was viewed as a clever stratagem to prove that India was not yet fit for self-government. "Instinctively", as Brailsford wrote, "the demand arose that the Commission during its tour, should be boycotted. After a numbing sleep of five years the nationalist spirit awakened." Indian indignation soon became vocal. Within a week, Srinivasa Iyengar, President of the Congress, issued "a statement proclaiming boycott and resistance to the Commission." The reason adduced was deliberate affront to the Indian sentiment, "defiance of the opinion of all parties in India and of the national demand made twice in the Assembly in appointing an all-British Commission and thereby rejecting the "natural claim of the Indians to determine their own constitution" hence Congress would neither serve on the Committees nor vote for their appointment and would have nothing to do with the Commission. There was also a resolve to frame a Swaraj Constitution with the help of other Indian political parties. Two days later on 16 November, Jinnah and Liberal leaders issued another statement on behalf of the Congress Muslim League, Liberal Federation, Hindu Maha Sabha, and Chambers of Commerce as well as Mill Owners Association declaring their resolve not to "take any part or share in the work of the Commission as at present constituted," "The Congress at its

annual session at Madras, endorsed this decision and the boycott of the Commission was conducted with great zeal. Almost simultaneously Liberal Federation, Muslim League, Hindu Maha Sabha and Khilafat Conference also followed suit. When the Legislative Assembly met in February 1928, Lajpat Rai moved that "The Assembly recommends to the Governor-General in Council that he be pleased to convey to His Majesty's Government the Assembly's entire lack of confidence in the Parliamentary Commission which had been appointed to recast the Constitution of India." His main argument was that the question was not one of enquiry, but "it was a problem for negotiation and agreement." Government's retort that the ultimate responsibility lay with the Parliament and that there was need for enquiry into matters like the rights of minorities, communal differences, provincial finance etc. carried little weight with the members, and the motion was carried by 68 votes against 62. Thus was registered the disapproval of the Legislative Assembly to the Commission, "but some elements like the faction of the Muslim League led by Mohammad Shafi, the Depressed Classes led by Ambedkar, the Non-Brahmins of Madras and a few other parties representing special interests offered their co-operation and helped to form the Indian Committees, both Central and Provincial, which were associated with Simon Commission. However, the overwhelming weight of public opinion was hostile to it, which was amply demonstrated by the processions flying black flags and repeating the slogan of "Simon Go Back", massive public meetings demanding recall of the Commission, hartals and its complete social boycott in every town which it visited, particularly, and everywhere in the country generally. The Commission moved only with police protection and adoption of repressive measures. Resort was had to lathi charges on the processions and demonstrations voicing their opposition to the Commission at railway stations. One in Lahore led by Lajpat Rai was severely mauled, and the Lala was deliberately hit on the heart which caused his death a few days later. At Lucknow, Jawahar Lal Nehru was beaten which might have ended fatally but for the protection by Govind Ballabh Pant, who suffered grievously. In other places also police atrocities were in evidence, but the zealous boycott.

by the people did not abate. However, the Commission also doggedly pursued its programme, but the manifestation of resentment in the Councils and outside was not such as might be ignored by the government.

The Commission was appointed to enquire into "the working of the system of government, the growth of education and the development of representative institutions in British India, and matters connected therewith and reporting whether and to what extent it is desirable to establish the principle of responsible government or to extend, modify, or restrict the degree of responsible government then existing there, including the question whether the establishment of second Chamber of local legislatures is or is not desirable." In the process of their enquiry, the Commissioners "were increasingly impressed by the impossibility of considering constitutional problems of British India without taking into account the relations between British India and the Indian States". Consequently the terms of reference of the Commission were expanded so as to bring such relations within its purview. Two Committees were also appointed to examine, respectively, the progress of education in India and the position of the Indians States in relation to British India and suggest measures for bringing them into harmony. The first under Hartzog reviewed the educational system prevalent in the country, while the second with Harcourt Butler as its chairman threw light on the principles governing British relations with Indian Princes. The Commission with the association of the Central Committee of Indian Legislature and the Provincial Committee within the province, examined official witnesses and received memoranda and oral evidence from many non-official organisations based on sectional or communal interests. It had no contact with the nationalist opinion, though the Nehru Committee Report was seen by it. Their report was therefore coloured by the prejudices entertained by the British and the sectional interests of the parties which presented their case. At the outset the Commission made it evident that they proceeded on their task "upon the basis of the assumption that the goal defined by Mr. Montagu represented accepted policy to be pursued". This assumption naturally restricted their vision and the could

not conceive of any measures to correspond with the existing political situation and the aspirations of nationalist India. The Commission was further limited in its approach by the British notion of homogeneity and unity of the nation which alone would be the basis of democratic self-government. Indian conditions, however, varied considerably from their norm and the emphasis laid by narrow sectional interests on their special claims strengthened their bias against any radical political advance. The Commission perhaps deliberately ignored, as Dr Tarachand put it, that "the only essential condition of Self-Government is the existence among the people of the will to live together under a common political order," desire to maintain its integrity and "consciousness of unity so strong as to resist and overcome the interests of the parts, when they come into conflict with the good of the whole." Therefore their recommendations, despite the feeling that "communal electorates constitute a very serious hindrance to the development of the self-governing principle", laid stress on separate representation for the Muslims to be continued. However, this Commission recommended further advance towards provincial autonomy and the establishment of federal structure in the governance of India so as to bring the Indian States within it, perhaps as a counterpoise to the national demand for complete self-government. The report of the Simon Commission was almost shelved before its publication by the new proposal of the British Government to convene a Round Table Conference to determine the nature of future advance. But it cannot be denied that the report largely influenced British thinking and had influenced the character of the constitutional changes which came about in 1935.

Before the Simon Commission could begin its work, the political India had taken up the challenge thrown out by Birkenhead to frame a constitution which would meet with general acceptance. The Madras session of the Congress had urged its necessity; and decided to convene an All-Parties Conference to draft a constitution for India. The Conference met in Bombay on May 19, 1928 and appointed a committee with Motilal Nehru as its Chairman and Tej Bahadur Sapru, Alimam, I Aney, Mangal Singh, Shuaib Qureshi, Pradhan and

Subhash Chandra Bose as its members to "consider and determine the principles of a Constitution for India". The objective was "the establishment of full responsible government". The Committee presented an unanimous report to the All-Parties Conference which met in Lucknow on August 28, and endorsed it. It was also accepted by the All-India Congress Committee in November. It was then presented to the All-Parties Convention which met in Calcutta from 22 December 1928 to January, 1929, and included all the most prominent leaders of the country. The proposals of the Committee were based on the principle that the system of government in India and its political status would conform to that prevailing in the Self-Governing Dominions of Canada, South Africa, Australia and Irish Free State. Dominion Status as opposed to complete independence was thus the basic feature of the proposed constitution, however, freedom of action was accorded to groups and parties which stood for complete independence. The Report further confined itself to recommendations about British India and did not include the Indians States, as it envisaged a link of the two parts on a federal basis. There was also provision for Fundamental Rights nineteen of which were recommended for inclusion in the Constitution. These related primarily to the "freedom of conscience, of profession and practice of religion." Another important principle accepted was that of adult suffrage, every person of either sex of the age of 21 or above, unless disqualified by law had the right to vote, both for Central and Provincial Legislatures. The Committee had to contend with the communal problem, which was then the most outstanding question, prejudicing unity of state. Its verdict was against separate communal electorates and recommended joint and mixed electorates with reservation of seats for minorities on population basis with the right to contest additional seats. At the same time, full protection was guarantee to the religious and cultural interests of the Muslims, and redistribution of provinces was suggested so as to create even Muslim, majority provinces. There was, however, to be no reservation of seats for the Muslims in Panjab and Bengal, where they did not form a minority.



Hindus of the North-West Frontier Province were accorded the right of reservation of seats as a minority. There were to be two Chambers at the Centre, the Senate elected for seven years with 200 members elected by the Provincial Councils, and the House of Representatives with 500 members elected for five years by adult franchise. The Governor-General appointed by the British Crown was to act on the advice of the Executive Council which was to be collectively responsible to the members of the lower house. There was provision for a Committee of Defence, having as its members the Prime Minister, the Minister for Defence, the Commander-in-Chief, the Commanders of Air and Naval forces, the Chief of the General Staff and two other experts. The function of the Committee was to advise the government and department concerned with problems of defence upon general questions of policy and framing of estimates for defence. Also no measures affecting discipline or maintenance of forces of the commonwealth might be introduced in the legislature without the recommendation of the committee. This provision has been interpreted by Pattabhi Sitaramanya as a vestige of dyarchy. The Provincial Councils were to be elected for a term of five years on the basis of adult suffrage, and the Governor was to act on the advice of the Executive Council, responsible to the legislature. There was recommendation for the establishment of a Supreme Court and Public Service Commission. Also provision was made for separate provinces of Sind and Karnatak, and other provinces might be formed on linguistic basis. Distribution of powers of the Centre and the Provinces was to be included in the schedules.

The All-Parties Convention discussed the report threadbare. On behalf of the Muslim League, which had met in Calcutta, Jinnah moved certain amendments to fortify the position and special rights of the Muslims. He desired one third seats in the Central legislature reserved for the Muslims and reservation of seats in Panjab and Bengal on the population basis. He also proposed residuary powers to be vested in the provinces, and that separation of Sind should not be postponed till the new Constitution came into force. Further that the amendment of the Constitution should not be effected unless four-

fifths majority of either house separately and of both houses voting jointly was in its favour. These were concessions required to lull the fears of the Muslims agreeing to joint electorates and adult franchise. Despite strong support and powerful plea by Tej Bahadur Sapru, for the acceptance of these modest proposals, ensuring communal harmony, Jayakar on behalf of the Hindu Mahasabha opposed them, questioned the representative character of Jinnah and the amendements, except that relating to the amendment of the constitution were lost. A favourable opportunity for communal harmony was thus sacrificed on the altar of Hindu-rigidity. That there was intense suspicion in the two communities of each other cannot be doubted. The Hindus were ill prepared to allow special privileges to Muslims which might strengthen their position in the north-western wing of the country and the Centre, for fear of their combining with trans-boarder hordes in Afghanistan and the block of Muslim states to the west. The minority naturally is afraid of being suppressed in a government dominated by a majority professing different religious affiliations. In a democratic constitution, without invariable safeguards and special position, the Muslims were apprehensive of encroachment on their religious and cultural identity. Thus, with the defeat of Jinnah's proposals, prospect of Hindu-Muslim unity, the basic requirement of political advance, was lost, and more extreme demands were made by them. Soon after Jinnah put forth his fourteen points which though not adopted by the Muslim League gave indication of the Muslim mind which was growing more radical in its demand culminating in the partition of India. The Muslim community was itself divided into many sections, the League under Jinnah, the other part under Mohammad Shafi which stood by the Simon Commission and relied upon the British Government for security of Muslims, the Agha Khan Muslim Conference standing for separate electorates and desiring advance towards self-government with adequate safeguards for the Muslims, and the Nationalist Muslims with Azad, Ansari, Sherwani and Khaliqzaman accepting the Congress ideals and methods. Thus with the dissolution of the All-Parties Convention, the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity by mutual consent was shelved

for ever, and the rift continued to widen. To a large extent it was helped by the rulers themselves who rejoiced in the gaping division between the two communities.

The opposition to Simon Commission grew in dimension and was greatly helped by the deteriorating economic conditions in the country. The fall in world prices of raw materials which India largely exported had affected the agricultural classes most adversely, whose standard of living was greatly depressed. At the same time the industrial section was also affected by the rise of prices in the imported articles, such as cloth. The wages of the working classes "lagged behind the price increase" which led to strikes, causing loss of millions of working days. The textile mills, Tata Iron Steel Works, the railways, all were affected by the wave of strikes. The industrial life was further disturbed by the Precession in Western Countries, and Indian economy suffered a severe jolt and distress became general. This economic factor led to intensification of discontent and provided fertile soil for the emergence of radical parties and the growth of terrorist societies. Communist propaganda was also in evidence which the Government of India wanted to crush by arresting 38 of their leaders and prosecuting them by what is known as Meerut conspiracy case. In the Congress circles also a new group was forming which had imbibed socialist thought, and under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose irreconcilably voiced the demand for complete independence, and opposed all proposals for Dominion Status. At the Madras Congress in 1927, their voice was audibly heard when Nehru moved the resolution that "This Congress declares the goal of the Indian people to be complete National Independence." It was accepted by the Subjects Committee. But Gandhiji did not endorse it and said, "The Congress stultifies itself by repeating year after year resolutions of this character when it knows it is not capable of carrying them into effect : the Congress cannot become the irresistible force it was and is intended to be, if its resolutions are ill-conceived and are to remain merely paper resolutions," Nonetheless the years 1928 and 1929 resounded with debate on the Dominion Status versus Independence. Mahatma Gandhi emphasised non-violent action of complete dissassociation with the tyrannous govern-

ment. The Bardoli Satyagraha on the issue of revision of land-tax by nearly 25% clearly showed the strength of the people to withstand severest oppression, and once again proved the efficacy of non-violent satyagraha, practiced by the farmers under the leadership of Sardar Vallabhai Patel. All these symptoms were a clear indication of the change in the spirit of the people and betokened need for early modification in the policy of the rulers. The Congress session of Calcutta in 1928, under the Presidentship of Motilal Nehru, showed the way the wind was blowing.

In his Presidential address "Panditji declared in emphatic terms that our destination is freedom, the form and extent of which would depend upon the time, and the circumstances under which it came." To him the Congress was then "to pause and take stock of our equipment and finally throw the strength into one great effort to reach the goal." Thus was the goal defined and the people alerted to concert measures to achieve it. However, the controversy relating to the form, whether it would be Dominion Status or complete independence, raged in all its intensity. But ultimately a compromise was arrived at and the final resolution was adopted as follows :

"This Congress having considered the Constitution recommended by the All-Parties Committee Report welcomes it as a great contribution towards the solution of India's political and communal problems.....and whilst adhering to the resolution relating to Complete Independence passed at the Madras Congress, approved the Constitution drawn up by the committee as a great step in political advance, specially as it represents the largest measure of agreement attained among the important parties in the country."

"Subject to the exigencies of the political situation, the Congress will adopt the Constitution if it is accepted in its entirety by the British Parliament on or before 31st December 1929, but in the event of its non-acceptance by the date or its earlier rejection, the Congress will organise a campaign of non-violent, non-co-operation by advising the country to refuse taxation and in such other manner as may be decided upon." However, propaganda for Complete Independence in the name of the Congress was not to be banned. Thus the ball was thrown

into the court of the British Government and rift in the Congress was avoided by keeping the goal in suspense for a year while freedom to propagate both the aims was allowed. At the same time, by another resolution, the Congress determined the measures which might be taken in the interim period. These related to prohibition, boycott of foreign cloth and production of Khaddar, removal of social abuses, disabilities of women so as to prepare them for full share in national upbuilding, removal of untouchability and enlistment of volunteers as well as enrolment of members of the Congress. These constructive activities were directed towards preparation for civil disobedience when the time arrived for it. Gandhiji's exhortation was that, "It is only by Constructive programme that the revival of non-cooperation is possible. If you want the Nehru Report to fructify the least you can do is to work out this resolution."

In the new year, the year of grace, there was thunder in the atmosphere. The government was taking full recourse to repression to cow down the people and dampen their spirit for non-cooperation. On the other side, radicalism, characterised by labour strikes and revival of terrorist activities had raised its head. The youth was in ferment. In April the Government of India introduced the Public Safety Bill, discussion on which was postponed by Vithalbhai Patel, President of the Assembly, on the ground that the matter could not be discussed without reference to the trial of communists at Meerut. When on April 8, Patel was to give his ruling after the passage of the Trades Disputes Bill, two bombs along with pamphlets were dropped in the Assembly hall by Bhagat Singh and his companion Batukeswar Dutt. Patel ruled the bill out of order, but the Viceroy issued an ordinance to that effect. Gandhiji denounced the bomb-throwing. Bhagat Singh warned, in his trial, that "a veritable storm is about to break out", and claimed revolution as the inalienable right of mankind. "Freedom is the imprescriptible birth right of all...The sovereignty of the people is the ultimate destiny of workers." They were sentenced to life imprisonment but soon along with others they were implicated in the Lahore conspiracy case and the murder of Saunders, who led the assault on Lajpat Rai, and were sentenced to death. There was intense

resentment in the country against governmental repression. Also disunity between the Hindus and Muslims was growing to operate as "an obstacle to the nations advance". "Jinnah and the Ali Brothers drifted away from the Congress and they merged themselves with the communalists." Gandhiji's meeting with them did not lead to any compromise. Meanwhile, Irwin, the Viceroy was convinced that the Simon Commission would not bring any solution to the problem of India. "The boycott campaign, the challenge of the Congress, the growth of communism, the labour unrest..., were worrying the Viceroy." Hence, when the Labour Government came to power in June 1929, Irwin went to London to consult them on the future course of action. To avert the Civil Disobedience movement, Irwin and Wedgewood Benn, the new Secretary of State, chalked out a new line of action, which would leave the Simon Commission "high and dry", and the new constitution was to be provided for by a Round Table Conference, consisting of delegates from Parliament, Indian States and British India. Also Dominion Status was to be declared as the immediate goal. Armed with this decision the Viceroy, on his return, at the end of October, made the following declaration, on October 31, 1929 :

"In view of the doubts which have been expressed both in Britain and India regarding the interpretation to be placed on the intentions of the British Government in enacting the statute of 1919, I am authorised on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that, in their judgement, it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress as there contemplated is the attainment of Dominion Status." The promise, as Tendulkar notes, "was undated and undefined, but it made, none the less, its impression on the Indian leaders, for with it went the offer of a Round Table Conference as between the leaders of two equal nations, which Indians had long demanded in vain." Thus did the British Government try to take the wind out of the threat of civil disobedience by uttering the mantra of Dominion Status, which was the goal defined by Nehru Committee.

Immediately after the Viceroy's announcement a leaders' conference met in Delhi and an agreed statement was issued. It recorded appreciation of the "sincerity underlying the declara-

tion, as also the desire of the British Government to placate Indian opinion", and tendered cooperation in evolving scheme of Dominion constitution suitable for India's needs. Certain conditions were also laid down to be fulfilled by the British Government so as to inspire trust and ensure the cooperation of the principal political organisations. These were that all discussions at the conference should be on the basis of Dominion Status for India, the Congress to have predominant representation, political prisoners to be released and the Government of India henceforth to be carried on the lines of Dominion government. It was stated that "they understand that the conference is to meet not to discuss when Dominion Status is to be established. but to frame a scheme of Dominion Constitution for India." They desired that more liberal spirit should be infused in the government of the country. The Congress Working Committee endorsed the statement and stated that the offer was limited to the date of the next Congress. The happy atmosphere created by the declaration in India was soon fouled by the hue and cry raised in England and the specifications made by the Labour Government. Ramsay Macdonald denied that there was any change in the policy adumbrated in 1917 and that the Dominion Status was the goal to be realised "in the fullness of time, not in the immediate future," and the Secretary of State negatived the appeal for amensy. However, Gandhiji was prepared to co-operate if there was any change of heart in the rulers, Radical opinion in India was opposed to Dominion Status. still it was likely to fall into line with the old leadership if the offer was genuine. Hence it was decided to seek clarification from the Viceroy, and on 23 December, Gandhiji, Motilal Nehru, Patel, Sapru and Jinnah met him, soon after his return to Delhi escaping the bomb explosion under his train in the morning. But Irwin's reply was most disappointing. On the question raised by Gandhiji whether the Conference would proceed on the basis of Dominion, Constitution, the Viceroy replied, "It is impossible for him or for His Majesty's Government in any way to prejudge the action of the Conference or to restrict the liberty of Parliament." The main point at issue was that of self-determination which the British rulers were not prepared to accede to India at any time. They were opposed to

any "immediate transfer of power, and capability to determine policy," which the Indians demanded. But there was no unanimity among the political parties. The Muslims were opposed to civil disobedience and the Liberals were satisfied with the British declaration. The time limit for acceptance of Dominion Status by the Congress was running out. It was in this situation that the Congress met in Lahore, under the Presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru.

The address by the President explained his position which was that of seeking full independence, which meant for him the end of imperialism, "withdrawal of the alien army of occupation and economic control." Then followed the main resolution moved by Gandhiji to implement the undertaking given at Calcutta that if within a year Dominion Status was not accepted by the British Government then the Congress would stand for complete independence. The resolution reviewed the statement by the Viceroy and the efforts of the Indian leaders, and concluded "that nothing is to be gained in the existing circumstances by the Congress being represented at the proposed Round Table Conference. Hence this Congress in pursuance of the resolution passed at its session in Calcutta last year, declared that the word Swaraj in Article I of the Congress constitution shall mean Complete Independence, and further declares the entire scheme of the Nehru Committee Report to have lapsed, and hopes that all Congressmen will henceforth devote their exclusive attention to the attainment of Complete Independence for India." It called upon the Congressmen "to abstain from participating directly or indirectly in future elections," and to resign their seats in the legislatures. Also it appealed to the nation zealously to prosecute the constructive programme and authorised the All-India Congress Committee, "whenever it deems fit to launch upon a programme of Civil Disobedience including non-payment of taxes, whether in selected areas or otherwise, and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary." This resolution was put to vote and carried exactly at midnight of 31 December 1929, and the flag of Independence was unfurled at that hour on the banks of river Ravi. Thus was set the stage for Civil Disobedience which helped the country move forward towards full



independence eighteen years later, again at midnight. British intransigence had refused to read the people's mind, made accommodation impossible, and the only way left open to the people was to snatch freedom from unwilling hands by a campaign of non-violent, non-cooperation or civil disobedience. That the people had been trained in the ways of non-violence and endured suffering without raising their arms was amply proved by the events which followed the declaration of the programme of civil disobedience. The Lahore Congress registered the finale of an important stage in which ultimately independence became the goal and non-violent revolt the means to achieve it. Swaraj was now identified with independence, complete freedom of the people from misery, restraint and ignorance. The goal was definitely laid down and the pilot was chosen to steer the nation through a struggle of non-violent civil disobedience as a necessary step towards ultimate transfer of power.

At the dawn of the new year, the position was that while Sir John Simon was busy framing proposals for constitutional reform and the British Government was committed to the process of Round Table Conference for recommending their final shape, the Congress had given the direction for civil disobedience to achieve independence. There was no alternative in the face of Viceroy's failure to give unequivocal assurance that the Conference would proceed to discuss the form of Dominion Constitution, and disillusionment and loss of faith in the intentions of the Labour Government. Mahatma Gandhi, it was clear, would take up the movement at the stage when it was suspended in 1922, and the Bardoli experience of 1928 had given strength to the conviction that the people were ready for its escalation. However, the dangers inherent in a mass movement were evident and Gandhiji's insistence on absolute non-violence was clear to the nation. But this time he was not prepared to reverse the gear once the movement was set in motion. On February 27, he made it clear that "whilst every effort imaginable and possible should be made to restrain the forces of violence, civil disobedience, once begun this time cannot be stopped so long as there is a single resister left free or alive." This time it was non-violent rebellion and not mere

non-association with the government. Gandhiji wrote, "The call in 1930 is for engaging in final conflict." On the other side, the Viceroy and the British Government appreciated the gravity of the situation, and were ready to adopt firm executive action to suppress the Congress move. In this setting the fight for Swaraj began with "dignity, discipline and restraint" which were to "bring Indians self-respect, therefore respect, therefore freedom."

The first step was the formal declaration of Independence, and January 26 was the date fixed for it. Gandhiji laid down its purpose and the programme to be adopted. He wrote that "26th is the day not to declare independence but to declare that we will be satisfied with nothing less than the Complete Independence as opposed to Dominion Status so called." It was not the day for starting civil disobedience "but only to hold meetings to declare our firm determination to attain Purna Swaraj." Adherence to non-violence and truth involve self-purification. Hence this day was to be devoted to constructive work and at meetings no speeches were to be made but "mere recitation and approval by show of hands for the declaration." It began with the words "We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life so that they may have full opportunity of growth. We believe also that if any government deprives a people of these rights and oppress them, the people have a further right to alter it or abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or Complete Independence." Then followed a narration of economic exploitation, reduction of political status, denial of free expression of opinion and free association, harmful system of education and deadly effects of complete disarmament which had made people unmanly. Hence the declaration read, "We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this fourfold disaster to our country. We recognise, however, that the most effective way of gaining

our freedom is not through violence. We will therefore, prepare ourselves, by withdrawing, as far as we can, all voluntary association from the British Government and will prepare for civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes. We are convinced that if we can but withdraw our voluntary help and stop payment of taxes without doing violence, even under provocation, the end of this inhuman rule is assured. We, therefore, hereby solemnly resolve to carry out the Congress instructions issued from time to time for the purpose to establish Purna Swaraj." The declaration was read with all solemnity in every city, town and village and demonstrated the will and the resolve of the people to work for Swaraj. By it the country had proclaimed its freedom, the will of its people to be free. Gandhiji had said "freedom is like a birth. All birth takes place in a moment, and that moment had now arrived."

The ultimatum had been issued and the people had asserted their immemorial right "to refuse to assist the ruler who misrules," and throw off the yoke. But before commencing the struggle, as a true satyagrahi, Mahatma Gandhi wanted to "know the government side of the question and exhaust all milder remedies." Hence, in reply to the speech of Lord Irwin in the Assembly on 25th January, in which he had elucidated the purpose of the Conference as being "to explore means by which the greatest possible agreement or the widest measure of general assent amongst the various classes and communities and from all parties and interests concerned may be secured in India for the proposals which it will later be the duty of the Cabinet to place before Parliament," and that "the clear definition of the destination was not the same thing as completion of the journey." Gandhiji presented his Eleven Points to the Viceroy to test the willingness of the government to part with power. To the British Government the object of the Conference was merely to elucidate and harmonise opinion and afford guidance to it. Mahatma Gandhi wanted change of heart. On 31 January, he contrasted the object of the Viceroy with that of the Congress. He wrote, "The Viceroy would not mind waiting for the grant of dominion status till every millionaire was reduced to the level

of a wage earner getting seven pice per day. The Congress will, if it had power, raise every starving peasant to the state in which he at least will get a living even equal to the millionaire's. And when the peasant is fully awakened to a sense of his plight and knows that it is not the kismet (luck) that brought him to the helpless state but the existing rule, he will in his impatience abolish all distinction between the constitutional and the unconstitutional, even the violent and non-violent means. The Congress expects to guide the peasants in the right direction." "He was prepared to put off civil disobedience, if Britain would grant the substance if not the outward form of self-government." The Eleven Points were merely a token of the substance. These related to total prohibition, restoration of the exchange rate to 1 shilling 4 pence 50 per cent reduction in land revenue, abolition of salt tax, reduction of military expenditure by at least 50 per cent, reduction of civil service salaries by half, protective tariff against foreign cloth, enactment of a Coastal Reservation Bill, discharge of all political prisoners not condemned for murder or attempted murder, abolition or control of the C.I.D. (Criminal Investigation Department) and issue of licenses for firearms for self-defence subject to popular control." These were "very simple but vital needs of India", and their satisfaction would obviate the need for civil disobedience.

In his statements at this time, Gandhiji laid great stress on discipline, non-violence and the continuation of satyagraha to the last resister. Also he dilated on salt tax, and that was chosen by him to begin civil disobedience, which would initially be confined to him and the inmates of Sabarmati Ashram. Later it was to become universal, subject to limitations of discipline and non-violence. According to the tenets of Satyagraha, Mahatma Gandhi informed the Viceroy of his intentions by means of a letter of March 2, 1930 dispatched through Reginald Reynolds, a young Englishman who believed in the India's cause and in non-violence. The historic letter was both an indictment of British rule as well as an exposition of his concept for Swaraj for the people. He began with the enunciation of his faith in non-violence and wrote, "whilst...I hold the British rule to be a curse, I do not intend any harm to a single Englishman or

to any legitimate interest, he may have in India." The foreign rule was a curse because "It has impoverished the dumb millions by a system of progressive exploitation and by a ruinously expensive military and civil administration which no country can ever afford. He charged the government of reducing the people to "political serfdom", of sapping the "foundations of our culture," and degrading spiritually by a "policy of cruel disarmament," which has brought them to the level of "cowardly helplessness". Gandhiji then referred to his hope that "the Round Table Conference might furnish a solution." But by the Viceroy's inability to "give any assurance" that either he or the British Cabinet would pledge support to "a scheme of full dominion status," it was evident that the Conference could not possibly furnish the solution for which vocal India is consciously and the dumb millions are unconsciously, thirsting. In that situation, there was no option left "but to take steps, to carry out the solemn resolution of the Congress in Calcutta at its session in 1928." He told the Viceroy that, according to "responsible British statesmen...Dominion Status is virtual independence," therefore there should be no alarm in the use of the term independence if there was any "intention of granting such dominion status to India, in the immediate future." Further he referred to recent announcements, particularly in the debate in Parliament which clearly indicated that no alteration in British policy was contemplated which "might adversely affect Britain's commerce with India, or require a close and impartial scrutiny of Britain's transactions with India."

Further in this letter, Gandhiji elaborated on the measures which had reduced the people to extreme poverty, and in that context he mentioned the grinding land revenue, heavy salt tax, drink and drug revenue, destruction of village industries, "undermining the capacity for producing wealth." Then there were the liabilities which had been incurred and which it was imperative for "a free India to, subject...to the strictest investigation and repudiate those that may be judged by an impartial tribunal to be unjust and unfair." Also the foreign administration was most expensive, salaries being out of all proportion to the national income. And as no British political party was "prepared to-

give up the Indian spoils to which Great Britain helps herself from day to day", it was imperative for India to seek some remedies for immediate relief, if it is "to live as a nation, if this slow death by starvation of her people is to stop." The Round Table Conference "is certainly not the remedy. It is not a matter of carrying conviction by argument. The matter resolves itself into one of matching forces. Conviction or no conviction, Great Britain would defend her Indian commerce and interests by all the forces at her command. India must consequently evolve force enough to free herself from that embrace of death." Violence which was gaining ground, could not solve the problem, hence Gandhiji reiterated his intense faith in "unadulterated non-violence which alone can check the organised violence of the British Government." Hence he wished "to set in motion" the active force of non-violence as well against the organised violent forces of British rule as the unorganised violent force of the growing party of violence." Therefore he could not wait longer to express that non-violence through civil disobedience whose object would be the "conversion of a nation that has consciously or unconsciously preyed upon another, far more numerous, far more ancient, and no less cultured than itself." He emphasised the conversion role of Satyagraha. Hence he would resort to it with his Ashram inmates and disobey Salt Act which was "most iniquitous of all from the poor man's stand-point." And "as the independence movement is essentially for the poorest in the land, the beginning will be made with this evil." He was prepared to discuss the matter with the Viceroy if he chose to do so, but not to deflect him from his course unless "you can see your way to conform to the substance of this letter." Lord Irwin, however, warned Gandhiji that he was "contemplating a course of action which is clearly bound to involve violation of the law, and danger to the public peace." To this, Gandhiji's reaction was "on bended knees I asked for bread and I have received stone instead." Thus the die was cast and the Salt Satyagraha began with the march to Dandi on 12 March 1930, for as Gandhiji wrote, "India is one vast prison-house. I repudiate the law, and regard it as my sacred duty to break the mournful monotony of the compulsory peace, that is choking the heart of the nation for want of free vent."

At 6.30 in the morning of March 12, Mahatma Gandhi with seventy-eight followers set on the historic march to Dandi, a distance of 241 miles. It was compared by Motilal Nehru to the march of Ramchandra to Lanka or "the exodus of Israelites under Moses" by P.C. Ray. "It is a long journey", in the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, "for the goal is the independence of India and the ending of the exploitation of her millions." While the journey lasted, the Working Committee and the All-India Congress Committee, by a resolution, authorised Gandhiji to start civil disobedience and laid down the conditions for participation of others. Salt laws were to be chosen for Satyagraha and other forms or items were reserved for subsequent stages. He reached Dandi on April 5, and the next morning picked up a lump of sea salt and thus became the great "law-breaker." Then he laid open the breach of salt law to anyone who would take the risk of prosecution and manufacture it "whenever he wishes and wherever it is convenient." The signal was taken up by the nation and illicit salt was collected or manufactured in cities and villages and arrests of Satyagrahis mounted everywhere. Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested on April 14, and thereafter along with the breach of Salt Law, intensive picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shops was commenced. In this task, at Gandhiji's behest, ladies took a leading share. The Government took to repression, banned processions and meetings, gagged the press and police resorted to firing in Calcutta, Karachi and Madras and lathi charges all over the country. Mass civil disobedience reached its high water mark in Peshawar where subsequent to huge mass demonstration Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, the leader of Khudai Khidmatgars, was arrested. This led to a massive demonstration and armoured cars were used moving down hundreds of men. Two platoons of Royal Garhwal Rifles refused to fire on the unarmed citizens, broke ranks and handed over their arms. They were subjected to heavy sentences, when after use of air attacks on the city, Peshawar was "recaptured" with the use of British forces. All these evidences of repression led Gandhiji to announce his decision to raid the Dharsana salt depot and demand possession of the salt works, as a reprisal for the uncivilized and brutal manner in which the Government had dealt with the Satyagrahis. In his letter to the Viceroy he enu-

merated the instances of inhuman conduct of the authorities in various parts of the country, and termed these activities "a veiled form of martial law." Hence he wrote "before the reign of terrorism that has begun overwhelms India, I feel that I must take a bolder step, if possible direct your wrath in a cleaner, if more drastic channel." Hence he asked the Viceroy to remove the Salt-tax and prohibition of private salt-making, failing which he would march to Dharsana. Alternative to civil disobedience was violent revolt, which the British would goad the people to resort to, but he hoped the people of India would have "wisdom and strength to withstand every temptation and provocation to violence." On May 4, Gandhiji was arrested and a storm broke out over the land.

The raid on Dharsana salt depot was organised on 21 May and about 2500 volunteers under the leadership of Mrs Sarojini Naidu and Imam Sahib reached the place which had been barricaded by wire fencing and ditch filled with water all round. Mrs. Naidu after prayer exhorted the volunteers that "India's prestige is in your hands. You must not use any violence under any circumstances. You will be beaten but you must not resist, you must not even raise a hand to ward off blows." And true to this command, a picked column advanced to the wire stockade and disobeying the order of the police officers to stop, they moved on and a rain of lathi blows, without even a single marcher raising an arm to fend off the blows. The American journalist Miller graphically described the scene. He wrote, "they were down like nine pins...Those struck down fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing in pain with fractured skull or broken shoulders. The survivors without breaking ranks silently and doggedly marched on until struck down." Column after column moved on and, as Miller reported, "Although everyone knew that within a few minutes he would be beaten down, perhaps killed, I could detect no signs of wavering or fear." The police bet them, "methodically and mechanically", but "there was no fight, no struggle, the marcher simply walked forward until struck down." Then in batches of twenty five they advanced and sat down, waiting for the blows which were not spared. Police in its rage began savagely to kick the men in sensitive parts, dragged them and hurled them into the ditch. It conti-



nued hour after hour till at 11 in the day all activities stopped. More than 300 men were injured, two of them died, and the victims received no treatment for hours. The gruesome scenes were repeated for several days." The Dharsana raid vividly depicted the spirit of non-violence, defying the savage might of the rulers. Similarly raid was made on Wadala Salt Depot on May 18, repeated weekly till June 1, when 15000 volunteers participated in mass action, and invading salt pan carried away sackfull of salt. Also in Karnatak, the raid on salt works of Sarikalla was carried on by 10 thousand volunteers, and thousands of maunds were taken away despite "shower of lathis and bullets." The salt law was broken with impunity from village to village all over the country and about 100 thousand men were sent to prison, and many more thousands were beaten and belaboured by the police. Yet the spirit of disobedience thrived on repression which had grown in intensity day after day.

The Congress Working Committee met in June and "expressed its abiding faith in civil disobedience" and chalked out a programme for "complete boycott of all foreign cloth, inauguration of a no-tax campaign, weekly breaches of salt law, boycott of British banking, insurance, shipping and other institutions and the picketing of liquor shops." The Committee denounced the government for "inhuman repression" and impressed on the police and the army to treat the Satyagrahis as their brothers and not enemies. In the picketing activity great enthusiasm was shown by women who, discarding all seclusion, threw themselves into the thick of the fight and helped boycott, to gain success. Most spectacular was the success of boycott of foreign cloth and liquor shops, where women volunteers picketed them and by supplication or even throwing themselves across the threshold or even in front of cars appealed to the buyers to desist and the shopkeepers to take back the forbidden goods. Most of the shopkeepers had given the pledge not to sell and agreed to let their stock be sealed and inspected from time to time. This had the effect of reducing the import of cloth which came down even to one fourth of what it was in the previous year, so also was the fall in cigarettes and sixteen British owned mills in Bombay were closed down. Indian mills worked even two shifts and the production and consumption of Khadi had greatly multiplied.

The Lancashire Indian trade faced "complete standstill." The Viceroy imposed restraints on the press and ordinance after ordinance was issued, but 1930 saw no abatement in Satyagraha. Revenue fell by seventy per cent. The defiance of forest laws in Central Provinces (present Madhya Pradesh) was a success causing loss of sixteen lakhs of rupees to government. The jails were crowded, criminals were released and even open barricades were provided to detain the Satyagrahis. Also village headmen resigned at places, thus disorganising local administration. Students in schools and colleges also boycotted the educational institutions and many resigned government service. In many ryotwari districts of Gujarat (Bardoli) and Madras refused to pay land tax was started, and near Allahabad tenants refused to pay rent to landlords. Jawaharlal Nehru believed that a no-land tax campaign could easily have been started all over India. And as Brailsford wrote, "The people were in full revolt, and a bitter social boycott cut off the loyalist minority from the Nationalist masses."

Meanwhile, the Liberals had persuaded the Viceroy to expedite the meeting of the Round Table Conference. In his address to the Central Legislature on July 9, Irwin stated, "It is the belief of His Majesty's Government that by the way of conference it should be possible to reach solutions that both countries, and all parties and interests in them can honourably accept and any such agreement at which the conference is able to arrive, will form the basis of the proposals which His Majesty's Government will later submit to the Parliament". There was further assurance, that the pledge of Dominion Status as the goal remained effective. This announcement was followed by a conference of 40 members of the Nationalist and Independent parties in the Assembly and some from the Council of State which unanimously asked Jayakar to negotiate a settlement between the Congress and the Government. Then Sapru and Jayakar were permitted to meet Gandhiji, Motilal Nehru and Jawaharlal Nehru in jail and persuade them "to restore peace." Brailsford has rightly hinted that both the Viceroy and the Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald and Secretary of State Wedgewood Benn were eager for peace. "If they could secure it without the risk of a political crisis. They were also keen to make a success of the Round

Table Conference, a child of their brain wave, which they knew would not be possible without Gandhiji and Congress." The result was that when an opening for negotiations presented itself, they did much, but not enough, to make use of it. The first step was to allow George Slocombe of the Labour organ Daily Herald to interview Gandhiji in jail. The latter gave indication of the terms on which civil disobedience might be suspended and the Congress might participate in the Conference. These were "(1) that the terms of reference of the Conference included the framing of a Constitution giving India the substance of independence, (2) that the salt tax be repealed, prohibition carried out and a ban on foreign cloth imposed; (3) that an amnesty for political prisoners be granted; and (4) that the other points of his Eleven Points be discussed at a later stage." These terms indicated that there was no intention to yield and the tempo of the civil disobedience movement, with the mighty response of the people would not warrant any defeatism. The second step was the permission to Sapru and Jayakar to negotiate with Congress leaders. They met first Gandhiji in Yarwada jail on July 23, and got from him the letter for the Nehrus then confined to Naini jail. In this note he urged, as he had mentioned to Slocombe, that the purpose of the Conference should be restricted to a discussion of the safeguards that may be necessary in connection with the self-government during the period of transition, and it should be heralded by the "simultaneous calling off of civil-disobedience and release of Satyagrahi and political prisoners." He could not settle anything without consulting the Nehrus and the Working Committee. The intermediaries then met the Nehru father and son who were taken to Yarwada jail where Mrs. Naidu, Vallabhai Patel and some other members of the Working Committee met Sapru and Jayakar.

The three day discussion from 13 to 15 August ended in the Congress leaders giving a letter defining their stand. It said, "The language used by the Viceroy about the Conference is too vague to enable us to assess its value," and that without the meeting of full Working Committee they would not be in a position to say anything authoritative. However, they mentioned the terms which were imperative for a solution to be satisfactory.

These were that the Conference "(a) recognises...India's right to secede at will from the British Empire, (b) it gives to India complete control of the defence forces and economic control and covers all the eleven points raised in Gandhiji's letter to the Viceroy (c) it gives to India the right to refer to an independent tribunal such British claims, concessions and the like, including the so called public debt of India, as may seem to the national government to be unjust or not in the interest of the people of India. Such adjustments as may be necessitated in the interest of India during the transference of power to be determined by India's chosen representatives." This was not the language of compromise and sufficient vigour had not been generated by the civil-disobedience to compel the British Government to yield to these demands. Naturally the Viceroy considered any "discussion on the basis of the proposals in the letter as impossible." In the remaining months of the fateful year, 1930, the Government resorted, on the one hand, to more and more of repression, and on the other, held the first meeting of the Round Table Conference with the hand picked men, representing the princes, aristocratic elements Muslim communalists, depressed class leader Ambedkar, Hindu Sabhites and some liberal and other prominent leaders as Jayakar, Sapru, Jinnah, Moonje and Ali Brothers. The civil disobedience was also strengthened and for a time it appeared that in big cities it was the Congress writ which prevailed. Demonstrations, street corner meetings, picketing and boycott continued unabated. A no-tax campaign was started by Patel in Bardoli where repressive measures prompted wholesale migration of the population of 80,000 men to the state of Borada, showing their implacability to submit to the harshest measures of punishment which included sale of their lands, imprisonment etc. All these developments made Irwin believe in the futility of repression and, at the close of the year, he told the Calcutta (Europea) Association, "however emphatically we may condemn the civil-disobedience movement we should, I am satisfied, make a profound mistake, if we underestimate the genuine and powerful meaning of nationalism that is today animating much of Indian thought, and for this no complete or permanent cure had ever been or ever will be found in strong action by the Government."

Meanwhile the Statutory Commission headed by Simon had submitted its report and the Round Table Conference for ten weeks discussed the constitution on the lines suggested in the report. This futility of the Conference in the absence of the Congress which alone could speak on behalf of the people was voiced by speaker after speaker. No substantive work was done and at its suspension the Prime Minister expressed the policy of British Government. He said; "The view of His Majesty's Government is that responsibility for the Government of India should be placed upon the Legislatures, central and provincial, with such provision as may be necessary to guarantee during a period of transition, the observance of certain obligations and to meet other special circumstances, and also with such guarantees as are required by the minorities to protect their political, liberties and rights. In such statutory safe-guards as may be made for meeting the needs of the transitional period, it will be the primary concern of His Majesty's Government to see that the reserved powers are so framed and exercised as not to prejudice the advance of India through the new Constitution to full responsibility for her own Government." Macdonald suspended its work so that "Indian opinion may be consulted upon the work done and the expedient considered for over coming the difficulties which had been raised." He also hoped that the Congress "would wish to co-operate on the general lines of the declaration." This led to the release of Gandhiji and members of the Working Committee on 25 January 1931, and all restrictions on it were withdrawn. Sapru and Jayakar had cabled from London that no action be taken until they had discussed with them on their return. Gandhiji still insisted on the right of picketing and manufacture of salt. Boycott of foreign cloth and liquor and free manufacture of salt were the sine-que-non of independence for him and on the satisfactory solution of these he was to judge the outcome of the Round Table Conference. The Working Committee met at Allahabad where Motilal Nehru was mortally ill and died on 6 February, and had preliminary discussions with the Liberal leaders who arrived on 8 February. Thereafter it moved to Delhi on 14 February to negotiate with the Viceroy who had consented to meet Gandhiji. For three weeks parleys continued in a friendly atmosphere, and at every

stage the Working Committee was consulted by the Mahatma. There were many hurdles to be crossed, particularly the psychological one. On the Congress side Independence resolution was there which Jawaharlal Nehru was reluctant to whittle down. Then there was the problem of restoration of land to the peasants of Bardoli, which had been confiscated. But the most crucial point related to the excesses committed by the police against which the Working Committee was insistent for early enquiry to be instituted. And finally there was the matter of civil-disobedience being withdrawn on which the Viceroy was adamant. On the other side, the Viceroy had to contend with the obstinate bureaucracy whose craving for repression had not yet been satisfied and who would agree to no compromise. In England the Conservatives viewed with horror the fact of a seditious Congress leader parleying on equal terms with the representative of the King. Churchill bluntly gave vent to this sentiment. He commented, "It is alarming and also nauseating to see Mr Gandhi, a seditious Middle Temple Lawyer now posing as a fakir of a type well known in the East, striding half naked up the steps of the Viceregal palace, while he is still organising and conducting a defiant civil disobedience campaign to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King Emperor." He feared loss of India which would reduce the British Empire "to the scale of a minor power". Yet the Labour Government was keen for the success of the Round Table plan and the Viceroy, conscious of the mighty sweep of Satyagraha was equally keen on Congress participation in the Conference and establishing peaceful conditions in India. Gandhiji had announced on his release that he was "dying for peace," if it was had on honourable terms. Thus after talks lasting twenty four hours spread over eight meetings a compromise was arrived at and the truce was signed on March 5, 1931 in an atmosphere of good humour.

The agreement was announced as a Home Department notification and bound the two parties to it. Its main purpose was to enable the Congress to participate in the next session of the Round Table Conference, and as all compromises are, could satisfy no party absolutely. According to it, was laid down that, "civil disobedience will be effectively discontinued and reciprocal action

will be taken by the Government." This involved discontinuance of "organised defiance of the provisions of any law, (2) the movement for the non-payment of land revenue and other legal dues, (3) publication of any news-sheet in support of Civil-Disobedience movement and (4) attempts to influence civil and military servants or village officials against the Government or to persuade them to resign their posts." As regards boycott of foreign goods, the Government while approving "the encouragement of Indian Industries as part of the economic and industrial movement to improve the material condition of India," deprecated chiefly of British goods employed as a political weapon as it would be inconsistent with the nature of the Round Table Conference. Picketing against consumption of foreign cloth and intoxicating liquor or drugs would be permitted within limits of ordinary law. But such "picketing shall be unaggressive and it shall not involve coercion, intimidation, restraint, demonstration, obstruction to the public or any offence under the ordinary law. If and when any of these methods is employed in any place, the practice of picketing in that place will be suspended." There were clauses relating to release of political prisoners not involved in violence or incitement to it, and pending prosecutions would be withdrawn, and fines would be remitted. So also the cases of government servants who had resigned would be reviewed but posts permanently filled up would not be restored to original incumbents. All ordinances and notifications connected with the movement and declaring associations unlawful would be withdrawn by the government. The Government, in the then financial situation expressed inability to withdraw salt tax or the Salt Act, but permitted making of salt for peasants own use. On the political question, the clause though vague, "implied acceptance of the constitutional scheme emerging from the Round Table Conference." It stated "the scope of future discussion is stated...discussion to be with the object of considering further the scheme for constitutional Government of India at the Round Table Conference. Of the scheme there outlined, federation is an essential part. So also are Indian responsibility and reservations or safeguards in the interests of India, for such matters as, for instance defence, external affairs, the position of minorities, the financial credit of India and the discharge of

obligations." Such safeguards were inconsistent with full independence, as Nehru envisaged, but the employment of the words, "in the interests of India," was considered by Gandhiji as an adequate guarantee to afford substance of independence which he insisted upon. Steps were to be thus taken for the participation of the Congress in such discussions.

At the conclusion of the settlement, Gandhiji in a statement expressed his gratitude to the Viceroy for his courtesy and patience. He did not claim victory for any party and asked the people, instead of being elated to keep in view the ultimate goal of Swaraj. The settlement was provisional and "many things had to happen before the Congress could participate in the Conference." The Congress had accepted to take part in the deliberations because, as Gandhiji commented, "it seeks to make Federation, Responsibility, Safeguard, Reservations, or whatever other names that may be known by, such as would promote the real growth of the country along political, social, economic and moral lines. If the Congress succeeds in making its position acceptable to the Conference then I claim that the fruit of that effort will be Complete Independence. But I know the way to it is weary". The settlement was ratified by the Working Committee and later the Congress when it met for its annual session at Karachi, endorsed it. In its resolution on the subject, it was made clear "that the Congress goal of Purna Swaraj remains intact," and that "the Congress delegation" to the Conference, "will work for this objective, and in particular, so as to give the nation control over the defence forces, External Affairs, finance, fiscal and economic policy, and to have a scrutiny, by an impartial Tribunal of the financial transactions of the British Government in India and to examine and assess the obligations to be undertaken by India or England, and the right of either party to end the partnership at will and to make India free to accept such adjustments as may be demonstrably necessary in its interests." Mahatma Gandhi was appointed the sole delegate to represent the Congress at the Conference. Thus the Congress made no secret of its resolve to work for complete independence, but was prepared to accept in the interim such adjustments as might be essential in the interests of India. There was also iteration of subjecting the public



debt and other financial obligations to impartial scrutiny by a tribunal before accepting obligations. Reservation of subjects like defence, external affairs, in the crucial agreement was repudiated though not in so many words, for the Congress showed its inclination to submit to adjustments, as may be necessary. The Karachi Congress also emphasised the necessity of promoting indigenous cloth industry and prohibition for which peaceful picketing was to be carried on. Finally, a long list of Fundamental Rights was approved by which it was hoped to facilitate solution of the communal problem, satisfy the industrial workers and extend hope to labour for justice in the new set up. This was a necessary step to keep the new developing socialist wing within the framework of the Congress and pave the way for unity.

Before, however, Gandhiji could go to London to participate in the Conference, many hurdles had to be cleared. Soon after the settlement Lord Irwin relinquished office and was succeeded by Lord Willingdon whose attitude was not favourable or sympathetic. The bureaucracy in India had not taken kindly to the truce and there was no visible change in their resolve to break the Congress and frustrate its endeavours to attain Purna Swaraj. On the other side, many Congress leaders were not happy at the compromise which had come at a time when the civil disobedience was at its highest pitch and national enthusiasm for suffering non-violently animated the people. It was evident that full implementation of the clauses of settlement was basic to Congress participation in the Conference but the agrarian situation in Gujarat, United Provinces and the South, where no rent campaign had been taken up was not propitious for smoothening it. "Complaints poured into the Congress offices that the terms of the agreement were not duly implemented." Police outrages, including lathi charge and firing, had also recurred in some places. It is not necessary here to enter into such details. But the forceful collection of land dues in Bardoli with the show of the might of the police and the disappointing response of Bombay Government showed which way the wind was blowing. At the same time the agrarian problem in United Provinces also failed to be settled and Governor Hailey's reply was not satisfactory.

There was also the matter of peaceful picketing. Gandhiji went to Simla about the middle of July and gave the complaints to the Government of India. He felt the need for a permanent board of arbitration to decide questions of interpretation of many clauses of the Delhi Pact, though he did not press for a tribunal. But the Viceroy was not prepared for it. However an assurance was given that the Government "desired to adhere strictly to its (Settlement) terms," and that the local "Governments have been scrupulous in carrying out the obligations imposed on them." In a letter on 21 July, Gandhiji again emphasised the necessity of adjudication of points of difference in regard to interpretation of the settlement and listed the matters which called for immediate solution. Emerson's letter of 30 July, politely negatived the demand and pointed out the difficulties in the way of arbitration. He stated that the list of "specific instances given by Gandhiji had been referred to Local Governments enjoining them to "satisfy themselves whether any breach of the settlement is involved." Also he gave an assurance that the Government of India "are similarly prepared to satisfy themselves in regard to future cases of alleged breaches of specific provisions, for it is a matter of honour with the Government to observe the settlement and they have no doubt that it is equally held by you. It is by approaching the matter in this spirit and not by resort to arbitration that the Government believe that difficulties are to be surmounted". Yet the position in United Provinces and the unceasing flow of complaints from elsewhere led Gandhiji to inform the Viceroy on 11 August of his inability to go to London. "Continuing harassment in the U.P., Frontier Province and other Provinces," compelled him to this course. The Viceroy in his reply on 13th regretted Gandhiji's decision as "your misgivings arise from a misunderstanding of the policy of the Government and the grounds on which it rests." He reiterated the assurance of "my personal interest in every thing that has to do with the settlement" and "hoped that you would not allow disputes over the present details to prevent your serving India by participating in the momentous discussion of its future Constitution, which may determine the destiny of the country beyond your time and

mine." Gandhiji was not persuaded but finally declined to go to London then. But it was not final.

The Working Committee had, meanwhile, decided that despite non-participation of the Congress in the Round Table Conference, there would be no end to the Delhi Settlement, and enjoined on Congress organisations and Congressmen "to continue to comply until further instructions with the terms of the settlement is so far as they are applicable to the Congress." On that basis Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy on 14 August, explained his position relating to board of arbitration, on which he had not insisted and was content to be satisfied "as long as I got justice," and inquired whether on the government side settlement would continue "in spite of the absence of the Congress from participation in the Round Table Conference," or would be "now at an end." Hence if the "settlement is to abide, early relief in the matter of complaints already filed is necessary." The Viceroy's reply termed Congress activities as a "constant menace not only to the continuance of the settlement but to the maintenance of peace, particularly in the United Provinces, and the North-West Frontier Province". He reminded Gandhiji that refusal to participate in the R.T.C. involves the failure of one of the main objects of the settlement, but declared his government's intention "to avoid resort to special measures," but that would depend on the nature of Congress activities. This letter was considered to be not unsatisfactory specially because "of the government's intention not "to terminate the settlement," and he asked for an interview which was agreed to by Willingdon. Accompanied by Patel, Nehru, Ansari and Ghaffar Khan, Gandhiji started negotiations in Simla on 25 August. Three days later, as a result of discussions, a communique was issued, called "Second Settlement," which provided that Gandhiji would be the sole representative of the Congress at the R.T.C., that the settlement of March would remain operative, that the Bardoli complaint regarding repression would be inquired into but no others, and future complaints would be dealt with in accordance with the ordinary administrative procedure. On his side Gandhiji made it clear that "if any grievance is so acutely felt that it becomes a paramount duty of the Congress to seek some method of

relief, in the absence of enquiry, in the shape of defensive direct action, the Congress should be free to adopt such remedy notwithstanding the suspension of civil disobedience." Lord Willingdon also gave his personal assurance of looking into reasonable grievances. With this hurdle removed, Gandhiji rushed to Bombay to sail on 29 August, accompanied by Malviya, Mrs. Naidu, Pattani, Birla and his personal staff. Thus was paved the way for Congress participation by its sole representative in the Second Round Table Conference which met in September 1931.

The first Conference, by its composition, was not competent to achieve an early solution of the basic constitutional problem, that of hastening the process towards attainment of Dominion Status. It may be said to have been hand-picked and consisted of individuals supposed to represent diverse interests and not in harmony with the Congress and its ideals. Its constitution apparently was intended to demonstrate that the Congress was an extremist body opposed by various elements in the country. There were firstly politicians having affiliations with the moderate political parties favouring British connection. Then came representatives of communal organisations, chosen by the Viceroy, like the Muslim League, Hindu Maha Sabha, Christians, Non-Brahmins and the Scheduled Castes. Besides them were Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Princes or their representatives. This motley group formed the Indian contingent, scarcely representing the Indian people or in a position to commit India which was then pulsating with intense nationalism. On the other side were the representatives of the three Parliamentary parties, the Conservatives, Liberals and Labour leaders. There were eighty-nine members in all, sixteen British, sixteen for the India states, sixteen Muslims, three Mahasabaities, two Sikhs, one Christian, four non-Brahmins, two from the depressed classes, four landowners, four Europeans, one Anglo-Indian, one Indian businessman, twenty politicians and three Burmans. The Muslim members were chosen with the advice of Fazli Hussain who saw to it that they had no leaning towards the Congress and would adhere to the principle of separate electorates. This assemblage of Indian delegates, as pointed out by Coatman in his book, *Years of Destiny*, were not there to speak with

one voice for India as a whole, and represented only special interests. In the absence of the Congress which alone could deliver the goods, and which was then involved in a grim struggle with the British Government for achieving independence, the Conference had a show of unreality about it, playing Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark.

The main task was to ensure responsible government at the centre with necessary safeguards, but it was evident to everyone that without the clearance of the communal tangle, the path towards the goal was not easy. And to remove this obstacle, efforts began in London, even prior to the date of the Conference, when Sapru, Sastri, Setalvad, Jayakar, Moonje, Ambedkar, Jinnah, Agha Khan and some other Muslim members "met night after night continuously for several days." According to Setalvad, the Muslim leaders were inclined to submit to joint electorates if on all other matters their demands were satisfied. The principal of them were separation of Sind as a province, equality to the North-West Frontier Province along with others, representation of Muslims in provincial legislatures with reasonable weightage, and one-third seats in the Central Legislature. Jayakar and Moonje did not favour immediate separation of Sind and as discussions dragged on reactionary Muslims in India and in the delegation, having got scent of these developments set themselves to bring pressure on the Muslim representatives at this small conference and the whole thing was scuttled. The ideas of Fazl Husain determined the thinking of the Muslim members and he, not improbably influenced by British bureaucracy, stood implacably for separate electorates, weightage for Muslims in the provinces where they were in a minority and bare majority in Panjab and Bengal and would accept no reformed constitution which did not yield these concessions. The Hindu Mahasabha, gripped with the bogey of Pan-Islamism was positively adverse to these demands and all prospects for compromise melted in thin air of the Conference, and the Minorities Committee failed to arrive at any settlement. However, the Prime Minister assured the minorities that, "If you fail to agree to set up your own safeguards, to come to a settlement between yourselves regarding these safeguards, the

Government will have to provide in the Constitution provisions designed to help you." And in the then temper of British politicians, it was inevitable that such safeguards would not be in national interest and would perpetuate cleavage between the communities.

Regarding political matters, at the outset, contrary to British expectations, Sapru enunciated the idea of the Indian Federation, comprising provinces of British India and the Princely States. And quite unexpectedly Maharaja of Bikaner, on behalf of the Princes, responded to the principle of federation and self-government and the Nawab of Bhopal said "We can only federate with a self-governing and federal British India", thereby emphasising early transfer of responsibility. Even the Muslims, particularly Jinnah, welcomed the federation but wanted that the minorities must have a sense of security without which no constitution would work. Thus was set the tone for evolving the pattern of the new constitution, whose foundation would be "transfer of responsibility to an Indian cabinet answerable to an elective legislature," of course with safeguards or reservation of powers in the period of transition. And Ramsay Macdonald in his concluding speech had emphasised this aspect. He said, "The view of His Majesty's Government is that responsibility for the Government of India should be placed upon legislatures, Central and Provincial, with such provisions as may be necessary to guarantee, during a period of transition, the observance of certain obligations and to meet other special circumstances and also with such guaranties as are required by minorities to protect their political liberties and rights." Further that "the Central Government should be a federation of all India, embracing both the Indian States and British India in a bicameral legislature." Possibly some form of dyarchy was contemplated in the Central Government while full responsibility might be established in the provinces. As regards minorities also he reminded them of the obligations of the British Government to provide safeguards for them in the constitution, "designed to help you," if they failed "to agree to set up your own safeguards." The conclusion of the first Conference failed to inspire optimism which had marked its opening, and it was the unsettled minorities question which created doubts about the future. In the British

ranks, two different schools of thought existed, one standing for affording assistance in bridging the gulf between the Muslims and the Hindus. Wedgwood Benn and Irwin represented this group. But there was another composed of diehard conservatives, Churchill and Samuel Hoare, which believed in keeping the Muslims on their side by extending to them concessions so as to wreck the entire edifice of responsible government. The Secretary of State was conscious of the iniquity of supporting the minorities at the expense of the majority. The Muslim delegation naturally fell into the snares of the other group and in that had the active incitement of the bureaucracy in India, Fazli Hussain and conservative British statesmen to whom transfer of responsibility to Indian hands was nothing short of a calamity and end of the British empire.

When the second Round Table Conference met, Labour Government in the United Kingdom had fallen and a National Government, under Ramsay MacDonald but with a strong complement of Conservatives had been established in Whitehall. Benn was replaced by Samuel Hoare and Baldwin was the guiding genius. In India also Irwin was replaced by Willingdon, a Liberal imperialist who was unhappy with Irwin's approach to Gandhi and the Delhi Pact, as he believed that Benn had given away "almost every position in a supreme effort to get Mr Gandhi over to London." He also resented Gandhiji acting "as a plenipotentiary in negotiating terms of peace with the Viceroy himself." This new combination was not propitious for Congress participation in the Conference, and Gandhiji had rightly felt that he should not go unless a previous satisfactory answer had been found to the problem that the Conference will proceed to frame a constitution on the basis of Dominion Status, and also that the minorities question had been previously settled and an agreement reached. About the second, Gandhiji made some effort and met the representatives of the Muslim Conference and Muslim Nationalists at Bhopal in May 1931, but without any result. Muslim opinion had crystallised round Jinnah's fourteen points and the Conference in April had clarified its position. It demanded autonomy of constituent units of the contemplated federation, with residuary powers vesting in the provinces to whom the power was to be transferred by the Parlia-

ment. The federal subjects were to be selected by them with mutual consent. They wanted one third seats in the federal legislature, majority in Muslim majority provinces, separate communal electorates and fair representation also in cabinets, central and provincial. Separate electorates were insisted upon. The Muslim Nationalist Conference, however, stood for joint electorates, adult franchise, reservation of seats on population basis and safeguard of their culture by means of Fundamental Rights. But this wing of the Muslims had not much of grip on the Muslim mind. The Congress Working Committee in July "assured the Muslims and Sikhs that no solution of the minorities problem would be acceptable to the Congress that did not give full satisfaction to the parties concerned." It spelt its scheme of minority rights which included enactment of fundamental rights guaranteeing protection of culture, language, script, education, practice of religion, protection of personal laws and political rights under the jurisdiction of the federal government. There was to be adult franchise with joint electorates, but reservation of seats in the provinces wherever a community comprised less than 25 per cent of the population and according to population at the centre, with right to contest additional seats. Appointments to services were to be made by "non-party Public Service Commissions with due regard to efficiency as well as equal opportunity and a fair share in the services to communal minorities." It also ensured recognition of minority interests in the cabinets, both at the Centre and the provinces. Also it agreed to separation of Sind, uplifting of the status of North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. It supported federation with the residuary powers vesting in the constituent units. Largely it accepted Jinnah's fourteen points, but the time had passed when the Muslims might view it with any favour. Their opinion had hardened and in 1931, Iqbal and some others had been dreaming of an independent Muslims State on the two extremities of India, in the west and in the east, where Muslims formed a majority. Simon Commission had stuck to separate electorates and weightage and the British Cabinet had also been wondering whether Muslim provinces would submit to the control of a centre with Hindu majority. Hence the odds were against Gandhiji finding a favourable occasion for communal



settlement in London with all the reactionary forces arrayed against him. Unfortunately the communal problem loomed large at the moment, obliterating every prospect of an agreed political settlement regarding the future constitution of India on the lines envisaged by the Congress.

The new power complex in England, with Conservatives in a large majority in the House of Commons, governed the character of the Conference. The rulers including Macdonald, had no faith in Indian nationalism and, as Dr. Tarachand has rightly pointed out, they did not "consider it the duty of Indians rulers to promote accord between Indian communities," rather they looked upon the Congress "as an enemy of the British Empire and wanted to see its claims repudiated by groups of Indian hostile to it". And yet the main business which the Conference was inevitably led to tackle was the settlement of Hindu-Muslim differences. It would have been a miracle to bring staunch Muslim communalists who preponderated at St. James Place, with the support of the British element, on the same plane as the Congress which took its stand on unadulterated nationalism. The other groups, Hindu Mahasabha, Sikhs, Europeans, and even Depressed Classes were also laying stress on their narrow claims and promoting separatist tendencies. The Muslim mind was divided between the idea of autonomous provinces in an Indian federation or an independent Muslim State, and were not clear whether guarantees in the constitution would be adequate to safeguard their interests or "more tangible safeguards" would be necessary. For, in the words of Dr. Tara Chand, "The consciousness of Indian nationality receded from the Muslim mind and their politics became increasingly characterised by the concepts of politics and balance of power." They, as well as other minorities, made it clear that "no constitution would be acceptable to them which did not safeguard their interests." Gandhiji's enunciation of Congress stand could find no appeal, and the minorities committee despite informal discussions as well as formal, reported failure to reach settlement. Ambedkar demanded separate electorates for the depressed classes and stated that they did not claim "immediate transfer of power from the British to the Indian people." Muslims and Sikhs made acceptance of the federal scheme contingent on the solu-

tion of communal issue. Agha Khan's memorandum to the Prime Minister on behalf of the minorities, demanded "special representation through the communal electorates and a declaration of civil rights in addition to statutory rights. Gandhiji was prepared to accept the decision of the Prime Minister on the communal question only in respect of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Mac Donald on November 13, "officially blessed the Minorities Pact." On that occasion Gandhiji vehemently protested against separate electorates for the depressed classes, for he did not want the curse of untouchability to be perpetuated; and he proclaimed "I want to say with all the emphasis that I can command, that if I was the only person to resist this thing I will resist it with my life." The importance which communal problem received at the Conference so as to overshadow the constitutional questions, was the work of British imperialists, who were not prepared to adhere to the method of "consultation and agreement with the Indian representatives," the procedure of the Conference, but to impose the authority of Parliament as the supreme arbiter of India's destiny.

The proceedings of the Federal Structure Committee were no less unrealistic in nature. Mahatma Gandhi in his first speech explained the Congress objective of independence, and professed his desire to "find points of agreement" in a spirit of cooperation. He wanted "an honourable and equal partnership between Great Britain and India," for "India is a valuable partner not held by force but by the silken cord of love." At subsequent meetings he laid emphasis on adult suffrage, indirect elections through village panchayats, impartial examination of financial liabilities, control over defence, external policy and finance. He advocated establishment of a Supreme Court, thereby freeing India from the judicial subordination to the British Privy Council. Thus he claimed independence for India. At the concluding session, when the reports of the two committees were presented, dealing with legislative powers and reserved subjects as well as the lack of settlement on the minorities question, Gandhiji once again explained the Congress stand and affirmed his readiness for compromise, "if I can but fire you with the spirit that is working in the Congress...that India must have real liberty." He stressed the fact that to

achieve the goal India had no need to adopt violent measures and said, "It needs simply a will of its own to say 'no'" and that the nation is today learning to say 'no.' I do not want to break the bond between England and India, but I do want to transform that bond. I want to transform that slavery into complete freedom for my country." And in conclusion he expressed his disappointment with the work of the Conference and hinted at the necessity of reverting to the mode of direct action. He stated "will you not see that we do not want bread made of wheat, but want the bread of liberty, and without that liberty there are thousands today who are sworn not to give themselves peace or to give the country peace." Gandhiji had faith that Englishmen would do their duty towards India and therefore he wanted to "infact the British with that love for India. If the British people think that we shall require a century before that can be done, then for that century the Congress will wander through that terrible ordeal; it must go through that storm of distress, of misrepresentation and—if it becomes necessary and if it is Gods will—a shower of bullets." It was evident from the proceedings of the Minorities Committee that the Government's scheme was merely one of "Indians sharing power with the bureaucracy, and not one designed to achieve Responsible Government." The Congress would not be prepared for it, and Gandhiji emphatically asserted "The Congress will wander, no matter how many years, in the wilderness rather than bend itself to a proposal under which the hardy tree of freedom and Responsible Government can never grow." While concluding the session Mac Donald repeated the previous declaration that his government "desire to reaffirm their belief in an all-India federation as offering the only hopeful solution of India's constitutional problem." The Conference ended without achieving any positive results.

Before the Conference ended Gandhiji had received a telegram from India requesting his immediate return because of the deteriorating situation in Gujarat, United Provinces, Bengal and North West Frontier Province. Contrary to the Delhi Pact, revenues were collected or rents exacted, despite the inability to pay which made for serious agrarian situation in the first two

provinces, and even in Bengal where the people were being persecuted for their passive acquiescence in terrorist activities. In the frontier province the emergence of Red Shirts, or Khudai Khidmatgars, organised by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, had created a force opposed to arbitrary rule by the foreign bureaucracy. Willingdon's government and the provincial authorities were in no mood to negotiate or listen to the complaints preferred by Congressmen, and every endeavour was being made to throw overboard Gandhi-Irwin settlement. In the circumstances, the United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee, goaded by the refusal of the Government to meet popular representatives, authorised non-payment of land taxes. The result was the mass arrests, including all tall poppies and all earnest workers. Jawaharlal Nehru, Sherwani and Purshottam Das Tandon were arrested only five days before the arrival of Gandhiji. In Bengal also, non-payment of land-tax was authorised owing to the unbending attitude of the Provincial Government to negotiate or satisfy legitimate demands. A number of ordinances had been issued, press was muzzled and every preparation was made by the Willingdon-Hoarse Government to suppress the Congress even before it might launch the civil disobedience campaign. Gandhiji on his return on 2 December 1931, was faced with this situation. But before taking any positive action he wished to know the other side, and in a telegram to the Viceroy, referred to the ordinances, shootings and arrests, and wanted to know "whether I am to regard these as indication that friendly relations between us are closed or whether you expect me still to see you and receive guidance from you as to course". The Viceregal reply justified action taken in the provinces in the interest of peace and order which were his responsibilities, and expressed his willingness to see Gandhiji if he dissociated himself from the activities of the Congress in these provinces. In that event the Viceroy would "give you his views as to the way in which you can best exert your influence to maintain a spirit of cooperation," but he made it clear that he would not be prepared to discuss the measures which the Government had adopted and which must continue to be "in force until they have served the purpose" of preserving law and order. In his spirited rejoinder of 1 January 1932.

Gandhiji repudiated the charges and said "constitutional issues dwindle into insignificance in face of Ordinances and acts which must, if not met with stubborn resistance, end in utter demoralisation of the Nation. I hope no self-respecting Indian will run the risk of killing national spirit for a doubtful contingency of securing a Constitution, to work which no Nation with stamina may be left". He explained the circumstances in which action was taken in various provinces, and in conclusion, while expressing his willingness to cooperate, unequivocally explained his position. He wrote, "Non-Violence is my absolute creed. I believe that Civil Disobedience is not only the natural right of people, especially when they have no effective voice in their own Government, but that is also an effective substitute for violence or armed rebellion." Hence a plan for Civil Disobedience was sketched out by the Congress Working Committee, action on which might be suspended pending negotiations if the Viceroy would see it possible to meet Gandhiji. Willingdon's refusal set the stage for reenactment of Civil Disobedience, full programme of which was elaborated in the resolution of the Working Committee.

On 4 January, Gandhiji and Vallabhai were arrested and that was followed by mass arrests of Congressmen, all leaders of whatever level from village to all India, being sent behind the bars. Thirteen Ordinances were promulgated with an all-India application and every activity was governed by them. Congress and all its branches and affiliates were declared illegal and offices were taken possession of with all their papers and properties. A virtual reign of terror was established in the country, processions were lathi-charged, demonstrations broken by force and prisoners in jails barbarously treated and tortured. There was a widespread confiscation of property. But all these violent measures failed to break the will of the people. Men and women, in tens of thousands offered themselves for arrest. Picketing and boycott of British goods and institutions as well as liquor shops were pursued within tense zeal, affecting adversely British industry and government revenues. Breach of laws without discrimination, depending on local needs or exigencies of suitability, was taken up universally. No-tax campaign was also pursued. Various national days were observed to keep the fire

of national enthusiasm burning. Pattabhi Sitaramayya has correctly summed up the position, "The movement was country-wide and the provinces vied with one another in putting forth their best effort." There was no violence on the part of the people, it being prominently exhibited by the government and its agencies, police and jails. The movement was carried on with a secrecy which was inevitable in the face of cruel repression, but while it helped its continuance, "it reduced what ought to have been an open battle of defiance regardless of consequences, and carrying its own appeal to the nobler instincts of our people, a more battle of wits which only evoked admiration of cleverness." Thus has commented Pattabhi Sitaramayya on the character of struggle in 1932. The march of Satyagraha continued unabated in the face of government attempts at its violent suppression. But by the end of the year the stream of voluntary arrests seems to grow thin. Meanwhile MacDonald gave Communal Award as also a White Paper was issued outlining the main features of the proposed constitution. The Third Round Table Conference evoked no enthusiasm and the British Government with its Conservative composition did have no need for a negotiated settlement. The Parliament was to be supreme and it was to determine the nature of the next step in Constitutional advance. However, Gandhiji's fast for resisting the Communal Award, in so far as it related to the Depressed Classes, diverted the attention of the world from the political farce being played by Hoare, MacDonald, Willingdon trio, to the social problem which, unless effectively solved and with justice, might have corroded the national body politic.

MacDonald's Communal Award recognised the following as minorities. Mohammadans, Depressed Classes. Backward classes, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, Europeans, Commercial and Industrial Classes, Landholders, Labour, Universities and Sikhs. To each one of them a fixed number of seats were allocated and special electorates were to elect the members. This step, as Dr. Tara Chand has rightly commented, "encouraged not only the Muslims but the other groups also to consider themselves as national units with their particular interests separate from the interests of the general body of Indians. Nothing could be a more efficacious method of

fractionalising the country and preventing the growth of consciousness of nationality." And that was the intention of the British Government which had no mind to facilitate the working of responsible government in India. Apart from the principle of separate electorates, the distribution of seats was so manipulated as to promote imperial interests, and not permit any community to come into power on its own strength, either at the centre or in the provinces. The Muslims acquired 33 per cent of seats in the Legislative Assembly, were given heavy weightage in the Hindu majority provinces, but in the Muslim majority provinces their representation was reduced. In Panjab they got only 49 per cent of seats with a population of 57 per cent, whereas in Bengal their share was fixed at 47.6 per cent in a population of 55 per cent. Sikhs had a weightage in Panjab and the Europeans in Bengal were placed in a position to safeguard interests of British capital and maintain balance of power between Hindus and Muslims. However, the most inequitable was the provision of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes who were by that means divided from the main stream of the Hindus. And as Gandhiji had warned the Government at the conference, he protested against it by going on a fast unto death on 29 September 1932. Naturally this action "threw the country into consternation" and the leaders of various political parties, Hindus and Depressed Classes met in Bombay and after prolonged discussion for five days, the number of seats for the Scheduled Castes was fixed at 147, who were to be elected by the joint electorate of the Hindus and the Scheduled Castes had an equal franchise with the caste Hindus in electing the Hindu representatives. This agreed solution was communicated to the Prime Minister, who, as he had pledged earlier, accepted the agreed formula and the Communal Award was accordingly modified. The Hindu leaders at the conclusion of the Conference accepted the resolution drafted by Gandhiji, which read as follows: "This Conference resolves that henceforth, amongst Hindus, no one shall be regarded as an untouchable by reason of his birth and those who have been so regarded hitherto will have the same right as other Hindus in regard to the use of public wells, public schools, public roads and all other public institutions. This right will

have statutory recognition at the first opportunity and shall be one of the earlier acts of swaraj parliament, if it shall not have received such recognition before to secure, by every legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities now imposed by custom upon the so-called untouchable classes, including the bar in respect of admission to temples". This was a solemn pledge to abolish untouchability, and to promote it. Servants of Untouchables Society was established with branches all over the country and Gandhiji devoted his entire attention to it during 1933 and 1934 to purge the country of this evil. He had asked for facility to carry on this work in the jail and when it was not adequately given, he resorted to another fast and was released to be arrested again. In May 1933, he went on a twenty one day fast and was then released unconditionally. He advised the Congress President to suspend the Civil Disobedience which was done for six weeks. Gandhiji asked for release of civil disobedience prisoners which was refused by the Viceroy until the movement was wholly withdrawn. Willingdon also declined to grant an interview to Gandhiji. Hoare, the Secretary of State, announced the reason for this in the House of Commons. He said, "We are not prepared to negotiate and we shall maintain that position, Mr. Gandhi wishes to put himself in the position of a negotiator with the Government of India and also carries in reserve the unconditional weapon of civil disobedience. I repeat that there can be no question of making a bargain with the Congress as a condition for their accepting the ordinary obligations of law abiding citizens". The Viceroy did not feel inclined to hold "conversation with a representative of an association which has not abandoned that movement" of unlawful activities. Thus ended all chances of compromise. Yet Gandhiji was not prepared to shoulder the responsibility of guiding a political movement, which would distract from full attention being lent to untouchability removal work. Hence he withdrew mass civil disobedience, but authorised individual civil disobedience which continued for some time, though all militant organisations and war councils were dissolved. Later in July, after disbanding the Sabarnati Ashram he began his march to Ras. for giving his message to village people. He



was arrested and sentenced to one year imprisonment, but was later released owing to his fast and there upon decided to relinquish all political work for one year and devoted his time and energy wholly to Harijan work till August 1934.

The suspension of mass civil disobedience and its replacement by individual satyagraha, which attracted considerable response by people resorting to jail, however, were a prelude to the ultimate withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement for the moment. Gandhiji had confined civil disobedience movement to one individual only, namely himself, and thus terminated the second round of fight with the British Government for the independence of India. In the face of stern government repression adopted as a weapon by Hoare-Willingdon combination to break the will of the people to fight, the drying of the stream of satyagrahis was inevitable, so that by the end of 1932 only a few thousands responded to the call. When the civil disobedience was brought to an end by Gandhiji on 7 April 1934, its continuance as an effective weapon was impracticable. Then most of the prisoners were released and as Brailsford has put it, "The masses relapsed into sullen apathy, but this experience of suffering and defeat begot no loyalty in them, nor did it weaken their longing for complete independence." The movement had been greatly helped by economic factors which led the peasantry to swell the torrent of Satyagraha. Labour was also stirred but there were not as many strikes as earlier. The withdrawal of Satyagraha, as after the Chauri Chaura incident earlier, led to proliferation of political activity and opinion was growing in favour of reviving the Swaraj Party and fight the elections which would soon be there and enter the councils. This time there was no hindrance from Gandhiji and he accorded his full support to the move. On 19 May 1934, the All-India Congress Committee at Patna on his initiative appointed a Parliamentary Board to run elections under the guidance of the Working Committee. There was condemnation of the White Paper and emphasis on the need for a constituent assembly to draw up the constitution. It neither accepted nor rejected the Communal Award, which decision led to the withdrawal of Malviya and Aney and their founding of the Nationalist Party pledged to fight the Award. A

new group was also emerging within the Congress and took shape in the form of the Congress Socialist Party, with its leftist leanings. Thus when the New Act was adopted by British Parliament in December 1934, the Congress transformed itself into a machine for fighting elections to prove that it had the backing of the vast mass of Indians who were not satisfied with the new instalment of political reforms and sought complete independence. However, a sinister symptom was the communal outlook of the Muslims who had largely receded from the national movement. Thus began the new experiment in Provincial Autonomy provided for in the new Act of 1935.

In the period covered in this chapter great advance had been made towards the goal of independence. The government had been compelled "to admit the need of conceding Dominion Status with safeguards," and though there was no willingness to adopt the method of consultation, the Round Table Conference had been held to elicit the will of the Indians. Nevertheless the suppression of the civil disobedience had enabled the British Parliament to impose its will, but it was temporary yielding. In India the people had been impressed with a new spirit, and there was "unusual stir and excitement." As Dr. Tara Chand has pointed out though the goal had not been achieved, India had been transformed. Temporarily the movement had been crushed but Gandhiji "did not abandon the right of the people to resort to breaking of laws enforced by an alien government with harsh and oppressive sanctions...But the movement had made it clear that a temporary halt in activity could not be interpreted as a sign of permanent peace. The will to resist had not been eradicated." The resistance to oppressive alien government had "brought about a permanent change in the character and outlook of India...Qualities of fearlessness, self-reliance, sacrifice were evoked providing the virtues which lie at the foundation of freedom...Faith in British promises and good will was completely shattered and the independence was eagerly sought by all sections of the people." Brailsford, assessing the results of the struggle wrote the Indians : "had freed their own minds, they had won independence in their hearts, Gandhi had awakened gentle and passive nation from the slumber of centuries. It acquiesced no longer in the conquest.

A lasting change had happened in the minds of the hundreds thousands who went to prison and millions who faced the lathis of the police. It was enough to perform even a symbolic act of rebellion by making salt, or to picket a cloth shop as thousands of shy and sheltered women did. By these acts they broke the paralysis, the consciousness of a predestined inferiority...They shed their servility and thought henceforward as free man." As independence was for Gandhi state of mind, he had "endorsed the Indian with courage to be free." This was the greatest achievement and the mighty contribution of the civil disobedience movement which paved the way for the final round of revolt and transfer of power to the people of India.

## *Provincial Autonomy*

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With the withdrawal of civil disobedience, as after the non-cooperation movement, opinion veered round to the reinauguration of Swarajist programme of carrying the battle for independence into the legislatures. Intense repression, marked by inhuman barbarities and complete effacement of the Congress organisation, had dried up the stream of non-violent adherents of Satyagraha, flocking to the jails. The country was groaning under Ordinance rule and civic rights of free expression and assembly had been denied to the people. Hoare-Willingdon rule had given a display of naked imperialism and falsified all hopes of the commencement of the era of Dominion Status which were cherished by the statements of Irwin and the experiment of Round Table Conference. There was also the ugly demonstration of communal discord leading to the failure of diverse attempts at unity. The solidarity visible at the time of Simon Commission visit had exploded and the various All-Parties Conferences to resolve the political tangle between the Hindus and Muslims had ended in widening the rift further. Apart from vehement insistence on separate electorates and weightage for Muslims in representation to the legislatures and governments under the contemplated constitution, voices, though faint, were audible for nationhood and separate homeland for the Muslims. The Round Table Conferences had failed to provide any opening for the healing of the gap, and the Communal Award by the British Prime Minister had aggravated separatism. A certain stiffness had also developed in the think-

ing and attitude of the Hindu organisations, which was revealed in the obduracy of Panjab and Bengal Hindu leaders to yield even a single seat to accommodate Muslim craving for majority, proportionate to their population, in the provincial legislatures. A new alignment between Muslim conservative elements and Europeans was developing at the time. However, the most cruel attack on nationalist ideology was the provision for separate electorates with reservation of seats for the depressed classes in the Communal Award. This was an invitation to the evil of untouchability to perpetuate itself, and was naturally resisted by Mahatma Gandhi who staked his life to undo the damage. The rulers of Indian States, in a fit of righteousness and moved by sentiments of freedom, had endorsed the principle of an all-India federation at the first Round Table Conference. But their enthusiasm showed symptoms of growing faint and many of them began to have second thoughts. The British Government with a large Conservative majority in Parliament was resiling fast from the initial liberal response by Labour Ministers to forge a constitution opening the road to ultimate self-government for India. It was in this setting that the new Constitutional Act of 1935 was framed.

The first Round Table Conference had provided the broad outlines of the new constitution, but the second was bogged into futility by the communal tangle which refused to be unravelled. The third Conference was a mere formality and with its attenuated membership failed to make any impress. The British Cabinet then prepared a White Paper which was placed before the Joint Select Committee and finally the Constitution Bill was framed and passed by the Parliament to become an Act when it received the King's assent on 2 July 1935. To a large extent the new Act reflected the thinking of the Simon Commission and was wide apart from the aspirations of the Congress. It was not at all designed to prepare the ground for smooth passage to Dominion Status. Hodson, in his book *The Great Divide*, has termed the new Act "politically and constitutionally.. a remarkable fact, even though its highest intention was never fulfilled. Under it, India had her first taste and practice of parliamentary self-government, in the eleven provinces; although the all-India federation embodied in it was never created, the bones of a

federal system, including a detailed separation of powers, were formed and exercised." While he calls it "an edifice deserving admiration", Winston Churchill termed it "a gigantic quilt of jumbled crochet work, a monstrous monument of shame built by pigmies." The Indian opinion, however, was critical of the Act, particularly its checks and balances, which made a nullity of the federal part, and denied full autonomy to the provinces. Chintamani, with all his Liberal leanings, rightly observed that in the preparation of the Bill and the report of the Joint Select Committee, the Indians "had no part or lot in the deliberations of the Committee and the British *alone* were responsible for the recommendations embodied in its report", for it "never embodied the results of Joint deliberation between the British and the Indians...Not a solitary recommendation made by the Indian delegates proved acceptable to the British. The Joint Select Committee achieved almost a miracle by making the White Paper scheme still worse, an amazing feat indeed. And the Bill in its passage in Parliament underwent further changes for the worse, all to satisfy British diehardism." Indian opinion was almost stunned by the result of years of agitation and cogitation and many sections of it, including the Liberals felt and said that it would have been far better if no reform had been attempted.

The Act was the product of the complexion of government in Great Britain as well as prestige and limitations of finance which made adoption of liberal policy in respect of Indian aspirations impossible. The Conservative dominated Cabinet wanted to assert the sovereignty of Parliament and had no need for agreements of the Round Table Conference. The recommendations of the Simon Commission, therefore, guided its policy, and "considerable statecraft was employed in drafting the constitution to satisfy the differing aims and objects of the parties concerned—British and Indian." (Tara Chand). The insistent demand for "Transference of power into Indian hands", which could not long be negatived had to be reconciled with British economic and political imperial interests. Nothing was to be done which might lead to the diminution of British prestige and weakening of their empire. Hence, as Dr. Tara Chand has pointed out, "political skill and diplomatic dexterity" were

applied "to find a solution for the two conflicting aims, so that while the substance of power was retained by the British, the appearance only was given away." The thin veneer which glossed the new Act was discerned by Indian politicians and therefore it failed to arouse enthusiasm for it. The Act was based on full satisfaction of "the short-term needs of the British investors and manufacture", thereby perpetuating the exploitation of India and neglecting the interests of the Indian people which demanded a democratic set-up to remove poverty, rehabilitate economy and resuscitate national self-respect. This shortsightedness was responsible for the effiomeracy and impracticability of the new constitution and the intensification of political movement at a time when the British empire was engaged in a war of survival in Europe.

The Act of 1935 had two main parts, one dealing with the central authority, conceived as a federation of all-India, the British provinces and the Indian States, and the other with the provinces where experiments in democratic self-government were to be conducted. At the centre, while the federal structure, as suggested by the Simon Commission and accepted by the Round Table Conference, was adopted, care was taken to curtail the scope of responsible government as British opinion was not prepared to submit the Government of India to popular control. A form of dyarchy was therefore provided for and the operation of the federal part was made contingent on the accession of a proportion of Indian States, as would enable them to have at least half the seats in the upper chamber, Council of State, and make for fifty per cent of the total population of such states. Some of the Princes had initially, in a flush of patriotism and inspired by the hope of release from the bear-hug of paramountcy, expressed their warm countenance to the proposal for an all-India federation endowed with elements of responsible government. But soon their enthusiasm petered out and, by the time the new constitution had emerged from the Parliament, most of them showed hesitation to take the plunge. They were more concerned with the perpetuation of their autocratic powers and were reluctant to admit even the least infringement in that, which was inevitable in the new dispensation. There could be no question of sharing power with their people, least of all esta-

blishing any form of responsible government in their territories. Also they were averse to any encroachments on their finances which was un-avoidable in any form of federation. The statements of some extremist Congress leaders who supported popular movement in the Indian States and stressed the principle of people's representation in the federal legislature also alarmed them. Hence soon after the enactment of the new constitution, the Princes, in their conferences began to devise the means of wriggling out of the federation. They engaged top English, American and Indian lawyers to advise them and ultimately the minimum quota necessary for the initiation of the federal structure was not attained and it remained abortive. The character of the federation also provoked opposition of the two main political elements, the Congress and the Muslims. The former viewed with dismay the provision of nomination of the states representatives to the federal legislature by the rulers, as naturally that would introduce a non-progressive element invariably under the control of the British authorities. The Muslims feared the preponderance of Hindu strength in the federal government, because of the overwhelming number of Hindu rulers and their subjects. It may further be suspected that the British authorities were also not enthusiastic about relinquishing their hold on the central government, howsoever little it might be, at a time when the international situation in Europe was heading towards conflict between the forces of dictatorship and democracy. Indian resources in men and money and its pivotal position in the centre of the empire were powerful assets in combating their adversaries in a global warfare, and no British General at this time was prepared to sacrifice these advantages for a mere ideological pursuit. Thus the federation never became a reality, inspite of apparent endeavours by the new Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, to bring it into operation, and when the war came it was finally abandoned.

As conceived by the Act, the Indian federation was to comprise of a bicameral legislature and a dyarchical government, with special powers granted to the Governor-General for which he was not accountable to the legislature. The Upper Chamber, the Council of State was to consist of 260 members, of whom 104 were to be the nominees of the rulers of Indian States. The



remaining 156 seats were distributed so as to provide weightage to the minority communities or interests, 75 were for the general electorate, 6 for the Scheduled Castes, 4 for Sikhs, 49 for Muslims, 6 for Women, 7 for Europeans, 1 for Anglo-Indians and 2 for Indian Christians. 6 Seats were reserved for nomination by the Governor-General. This distribution meant that the majority community of the Hindus would elect only 31 per cent, while 24 per cent were for the communal minorities and 40 per cent for the States. In this arrangement, the States were "to play a peculiarly significant role" and "act as a stabilizing factor." Thus they were to operate as a stumbling block to "social change and political progress", which were the aims of progressive nationalist elements. The lower house or Federal Assembly would comprise 375 members, of which one third were to represent the States, again selected by the rulers and not elected by the people. The 250 seats belonging to the provinces were again divided on the basis of communal considerations. Hindus including Scheduled Castes had 105, Muslims 82 and other minorities 26 seats. Besides minority interests like commerce and industry, labour, land-holders and women had 11, 10, 7, and 9 seats respectively. There was no provision for direct election by the people, but the members were to be elected by the provincial legislatures, on communal basis according to the system of proportional representation with single transferable vote. This method of indirect election was a negation of democratic procedure. To such a legislature was entrusted the power of legislation on subjects which were classified as federal and what were known as concurrent subjects. The whole field of administrative matters was divided, under the schedule appended to the Act, under three categories, federal, provincial and concurrent subjects. While the federal legislature had absolute control over the first category and the provinces on the last, in the concurrent field both the federal and provincial legislatures had the right to make laws, with one proviso that laws framed by the federal legislature over-ruled those by the provincial legislatures. The legislative competence of the federal legislature was further circumscribed by the provision that "matters relating to defence, right of the civil services, the states and the minorities" as well as relating to external relations and

affecting British economic interests were barred from its purview ordinarily. Laws passed by the legislature were subject to veto by the Governor-General who might withhold his assent, reserve it for further consideration or disallow it. Moreover there was provision for Governor-General's Acts and Ordinances issued by him which would have the force of law for six months.

The executive authority of the federation was vested in the Governor-General who was to be aided and advised by a council of ministers consisting of ten members, appointed by him and holding office during his pleasure. They were to be drawn from the legislature but not responsible to it though they were expected to command a majority there. The Governor-General, besides, possessed certain powers which were to be exercised in his discretion or in his individual judgment. Moreover he had over-riding power over the government. There were some reserved subjects as defence, external affairs, ecclesiastical affairs and excluded areas which were the sole responsibility of the Governor-General in the performance of which he was accountable only to the Secretary of State. The superior civil service and police officers were as before to be appointed by the Secretary of State and their rights and conditions of service were protected by special laws. The erstwhile political department which regulated the relations between the Crown and the Indian States was separated from the main Government of India and placed under the Crown Representative, which office was held by the Governor-General. Thus "the powers of the Governor General", as Dr. Tara Chand has remarked, "were very extensive as numerous matters were subject to his discretionary authority, where he was independent of the advice of the ministers or the opinion of the legislature." His special responsibilities he "discharged according to his own judgment." Thus "the transfer of responsibility to the Federal Union at the centre" was reduced to a minimum, and the ministers had little power "to undertake measures necessary for the economic or social welfare of the people, or the solution of the urgent problems of the country." While the Act provided for "a genuine dyarchy, or sharing of powers, between parliamentary representatives and British-controlled authorities," as Hodson has put it, "the self-government was unmistakably in leading strings. This was the price of prudence-or of pacifying

the British Conservative Party." Imperialism remained secure in India even while lip-service was paid to the principle of self-government by the Indian people. "Responsible government," as Dr. Tara Chand has aptly remarked, "remained as distant a goal as ever, while Dominion Status vanished in thin air." In the interim period, till the inauguration of the federation, which remained still born, the constitution of the Government of India of 1919, with some minor amendments, was to remain operative and it continued to be so till the grant of independence.

It was, however, in the provincial field that some progress was apparent. Dyarchy was abolished and the distinction between the reserved and transferred subjects, as provided for by the Act of 1919, disappeared and the provincial legislature was empowered to control the entire span of provincial administration with some reservations and safeguards provided in the Act or the Instrument of Instructions issued to the Governors. It was thus the second stage of constitutional progress as outlined in the declaration of 1917, and was intended to satisfy the popular demand for Provincial Autonomy, which implied "freedom from outside control or interference and a government responsible to a popularly elected legislature." In both these directions an advance was made but not adequate to make autonomy real or substantial. In a federation naturally the jurisdiction of constituent units is limited. Hence the Act of 1935 defined the subjects which appertained exclusively to provincial administration and these followed the lines of the Devolution Rules of 1919. All these subjects were to be administered by the Council of Ministers, responsible to the legislature. The provincial list included public order, administration of justice, police, prisons, public health, local self-government, education, communications (except railways), agriculture, irrigation, land revenue and land tenures, internal trade and commerce, production, supply and distribution of goods, excise and entertainments. In addition under the concurrent list, the provinces were empowered to legislate in respect of criminal law, criminal procedure, civil procedure, marriage and divorce, minors, wills and successions, transfer of property, trusts, contracts, arbitration, insolvency, stamp duties, legal, medical and other professions, newspapers, factories, labour, trade unions, electricity, inland navigation and

cinema censorship. In matters pertaining to the concurrent list, provision was made that ordinarily the federal law would prevail and the provincial law would be "void to the extent of repugnancy". But where the latter had been reserved for consideration by the Governor-General or the King Emperor and had received assent, it would prevail, till a fresh law was made by the federal legislature with the sanction of the Governor-General in his discretion. In addition, the federal legislature could make laws relating to provincial list in cases two or more provinces invited it to do so, as well as when on the declaration of emergency in case of war or threat to internal security, it made laws pertaining to provincial subjects which had validity during the period of emergency and six months thereafter. Moreover, when the provincial government was suspended under Section 93 of the Act, on the failure of constitutional machinery, the entire power of legislation was transferred to the federal or central legislature. Apart from these restrictions, the provincial legislatures were free within their sphere.

But it was in the field of executive authority that the provincial governments, normally accountable to their legislature, were subject to control by the Government of India through the Governor-General who was accountable only to the Secretary of State for his actions. Firstly, it was obligatory on the provincial governments to administer federal laws and the Act provided that the executive authority in the province "should be so exercised as to ensure respect" for them. The central government could also confer favours and impose duties on provincial governments or their officers in respect of the administration of federal subjects and, in the event of such directions being ignored, the Governor-General in his discretion might issue orders to the Governor which would be binding on the provincial government. The Council of Ministers might even be over-ruled by the Governor under orders of the Governor-General in his discretion in case of difference between the provincial and central governments. In the absence of consent, compulsion, was to be exercised. In respect of tribal areas, defence, external affairs and ecclesiastical affairs, which were within the sphere of special or reserved powers of the Governor-General in his discretion, he could direct the Governor of a province in his discretion to act as his agent. Moreover the

laws provided for the exercise of provincial executive authority in such a manner as not to prejudice that of the federation and for that purpose directions as necessary might be issued by the central government. The Governor General in his discretion could also issue orders to the Governor at any time regarding the exercise of provincial executive authority in such a manner as to prevent grave menace to the peace and tranquillity of India or any part thereof. The special rights of services, recruited by the Secretary of State, in the provinces also called for interference by the Governor-General and to that extent limited the ambit of provincial autonomy.

Provincial legislatures were to be composed of elected members and the block of nominated government members was eliminated. The electorate was also enlarged so that 35 million people about 14 per cent of the total population as against about 8 millions under the 1919 Act were enfranchised. Adult suffrage which formed the basis of Nehru Committee Report was not accepted by the Franchise Committee and the Joint Select Committee of Parliament. Nonetheless a further step had been taken and the conditions of eligibility to vote were liberalised. The qualifications for a voter demanded six months residence in the constituency. Other conditions were liability to pay income-tax, payment of a minimum amount of land revenue, occupation of tenancy paying a minimum amount of rent, or passing of matriculation examination. Besides, retired officers or soldiers in the army were also entitled to vote. A woman was eligible to vote if her husband was qualified to be a voter. For scheduled castes literacy was an additional qualification. Thus the middle classes in towns, a fair section of peasantry and a small portion of industrial workers were enfranchised. There was, however, provision for nomination of members representing sectional interests as commerce, industry, landlords and industrial labour. For other places in the legislatures, communal representation was the accepted principle. Besides general territorial constituencies for the Hindus, special electorates were created for Muslims, Sikhs, Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Christians. There were also reserved seats for women in the communal constituencies and for Scheduled Castes in the general electorates. Another principle which was accepted by the Parliament was that of bicameral

legislatures in the provinces of Madras, Bombay, Bengal, United Provinces, Bihar and Assam, as what Keith termed, "a further concession to the conservative character of the whole scheme." It was adopted to enable "certain dominant sections of society" to act as a restraint, a "nuisance", on the radical instincts of the progressive sections. In Bengal, Bihar and the United Provinces the Zamindari or landlord system had prevailed and the second Chambers were provided, according to Masani, as additional fortifications to protect the "permanently entrenched big landed interests....against any popular assault on them." In Madras and Bombay it was done to safeguard the capitalist interests there, while in Assam it was the reward of the loyalty of British tea planters whose special interests required protection. These second Chambers or Legislative Councils as they were called were to operate as "effective brakes in normal times" to perpetuate the privileges of vested interests which might be injured by democracy, even though extremely limited. There was a total number of 299 seats in these six upper chambers. The lower house, or the Legislative Assembly, had the following strength in the eleven provinces: Madras 215, Bihar, 152, Bengal 250, Assam 108, United Provinces 228, Central Provinces 112, Orissa 60, Bombay 175, Panjab 175, Sind 60, North West Frontier Province 50 members. These were divided among the various communities which were given weightage where they were in a minority, "except that the Hindu minorities in the Panjab and Bengal were not treated equally favourably with the Muslims". Also in these two provinces the Muslim majority did not have seats proportionate to their population and could not command majority in the legislature on their own strength. In Bengal the Europeans held the balance while in Panjab Sikhs were the favoured minority. The power of legislation and exercising control on the executive government, apparently responsible to them, was entrusted to the legislatures thus constructed.

Under the Act the executive authority of the provinces, in so far as it related to the subjects included in the provincial list, was vested in the King-Emperor and was to be exercised by the Governor appointed by him. It was a departure from the earlier practice where control was vested in the Secretary of State for India in Council by the Act of 1858. The Governor,

representing the King thus became "the pivot of the entire provincial administration" and, as Masani has aptly remarked, his "personal role has gained in significance." He was empowered under Section 49 to exercise this authority "either directly or through officers subordinate to him." But the succeeding section provides for a Council of Ministers "to aid and advise the Governor in the exercise of his functions". In the Instrument of Instructions procedure about the selection and appointment of the ministers, including the representation of minority communities, was laid down. The ministers were to be chosen and summoned to office by the Governor and held office at his pleasure, and could be removed by him. The ministers had necessarily to be members of the provincial legislature and were responsible to it for their actions. This restricted the choice of the Governor and led to the adoption of the convention as in other parliamentary governments that the leader of the majority party in the Legislative Assembly should be invited to form his Council of Ministers, the choice of his colleagues being left to him. Thus alone was possible "close correspondence between the legislature and the executive", its "political homogeneity" and "collective responsibility of the members of the Cabinet." The leader of this Council was termed Prime Minister. The Governors did not relinquish the practice of presiding over the meetings of the Cabinet, which militated against free discussion among the ministers in the presence of the outsider, who the Governor was considered to be. Hence developed the practice of the Cabinet meeting informally and arrive at decisions which were formally adopted at the regular Cabinet meeting when the Governor was present. These informal meetings of the Cabinet became a regular feature and were so recognised by the Secretariat. The entire provincial administration thus came to be conducted by the ministers to whom departments were assigned and secretaries were attached to them. In conflict, however, of this primacy of the Cabinet came the provisions relating to the powers which were assigned to the Governor to act in his discretion or in his individual judgment. Section 50 of the Act while providing for the Council of Ministers to aid and advise the Governor, also laid down limitations on its competence arising out of the special powers and responsibility of the

**Governor.** He was entrusted with certain functions which he might exercise in his discretion, others in which the Governor was free to exercise his individual judgment. The Governor alone was the final judge as to the matters which fell within these categories. Under the constitution he had to administer Excluded Areas, inhabited by tribes who were not deemed to be "equipped to take their place in a democratic system of government" and whose interests might thereby suffer. These were to be administered by the Governor in his discretion while Partially Excluded Areas were subject to his individual judgment. Then he had the obligation to execute the orders of the Governor-General. Other functions invoking his discretion related to selection and dismissal of ministers, the summoning, proroguing and dissolving the legislature, holding joint sittings of the two Chambers, assenting to Bills or returning them to the legislature for further consideration, stopping proceedings of the legislature affecting the discharge of his special responsibility for security and preventing any menace to peace and tranquillity. Also he was empowered in his discretion to frame rules of procedure for the legislature and decide whether any expenditure was chargeable to the revenues of the province or not. The Governor was the sole judge of the danger to peace and tranquillity and therefore might exclude or limit certain functions from the purview of the Cabinet. In case he was satisfied that the peace of the province was endangered by the actions of "persons committing or conspiring to commit crimes or violence intended to overthrow the Government", the Governor could specify the functions which might be exercised in his discretion. So also he might withhold information relating to these matters. In addition, the Governor had certain law-making powers in his discretion which would comprehend promulgation of Ordinances and enacting what were termed Governor's Acts. Another power, drastic in its nature, was to issue under Section 93 the Proclamation that as a situation had developed in which the government of the province might not be carried on in accordance with the Constitution Act, "all or any of the powers of any provincial body or authority" would be "exercisable in his discretion". Thus under certain circumstances of which the Governor was to be the judge the provincial government might be suspended and the Governor resume



to himself all its powers, in the discharge of which he was accountable to the Governor-General and through him to the Secretary of State. This was a drastic power which was not there merely to decorate the Act, but was a threat to the operation of provincial autonomy and was actually used when the occasion arose for it.

Under Section 52 certain special responsibilities were conferred on the Governor, which in their cumulative effect covered almost the entire field of administration. These were prevention of any grave menace to the peace or tranquillity of the province, the safeguarding of the legitimate interests of the minorities as also the safeguarding of the rights and interests of the members of the Public Services and their dependents, the prevention in the sphere of executive action of discrimination against British citizens and their concerns. Furthermore peace and good government of partially excluded areas, the protection of the rights of Indian States and their rulers as well as the execution of orders and decisions of the Governor-General in his discretion were some other special responsibilities. In addition to these which were quite extensive in their scope, the Governor would act in his individual judgment in the matter of the appointment of Advocate-General, making or altering of rules affecting the organisation of the police force, and the inclusion in the budget of the charges necessary for the discharge of his special responsibilities. Though normally the Governor had no special responsibility in the matter of finance, according to Professor K.T. Shah, he had an over-riding power which vested in him. Though finance and law and order were not excluded from the purview of the ministry, yet indirectly and by implication their powers were so hedged in that the Governor and through him the British authorities could restrict the effectiveness of responsible government. "Protection of the police and enforcement of Law and Order" were practically made subject to the Governor's control by the Joint Select Committee of the Parliament despite the attempts of the British Indian delegation to maintain the jurisdiction of responsible government inviolate. But in the words of Setalvad, quoted by Masani, "responsibility is buried in a pile of reservations, safeguards and discretions". These special responsibilities, as Sir Samuel Hoare admitted, were "duties imposed upon the

Governor that cover the entire field of administration", and to that extent did detract from the effective functioning of responsible government.

It may be pertinent now to inquire how far the Government of India Act of 1935, both in the nature of the Federation it envisaged and the character of Provincial Autonomy it provided, met the aspirations of political India, would lead to the realisation of the ideal Dominion Status and introduced responsible government here. The Bill, even limited as it was in its scope, had encountered vehement opposition from the Conservative party in the Parliament and any concession in the way of Dominion Status might have wrecked all prospects of its adoption. Winston Churchill and his group were particularly active in torpedoing the federal part of the Act. Dr. Tara Chand, on the basis of Hoare's correspondence, has mentioned how they exerted pressure on the Maharajas of Patiala and Dholpur to resile from their earlier stand in its favour, and Rothermere and others spent large sums in dissuading the princes from joining the federation. It was even alleged that Rushbrooke Williams, then adviser to the princes, went about telling them that the Government of India was not keen on federation. The princes themselves had begun to have second thoughts, and the Chamber of Princes in 1935 made its inauguration contingent "upon the clear recognition of the sovereignty of the states and their rights under treaties and engagements". It may not be incorrect to infer that the initial enthusiasm of the princes was generated by their belief that the federation would secure them from the nagging interference by the Political Department and would free them from the cramping influence of paramountcy. But their expectations had little prospect of realisation and the creation of the Crown Representative and direct control by the British Crown were steps which gave little promise of their redemption. On the other side, developments within the Congress, the most powerful political element in the country which would naturally wield the dominant influence in the federation, created alarm in their mind. Mahatma Gandhi had abstained from interfering in the internal affairs of the states, but he had in 1934 withdrawn from the Congress and Jawaharlal Nehru with his socialist friends emerged as a powerful group within it, and they had no hesitation to support

the people's movement in the states. The Congress demanded responsible government in the states and called for election of states' representatives to the Federal Assembly by the subjects and not nomination by the rulers. These symptoms of opposition to the autocracy of the princes made them resist the inauguration of the federation and threw them into the lap of the Conservatives who were positively hostile to the new Act. Apart from the princes, the Congress was apathetic to it as in its shape the federation was considered to be a strong-hold of conservatism which would defeat all schemes of socio-economic progressive measures by the popular government. The Muslims were also not favourable to it for fear of Hindu majority which despite all the safeguards and special weightages would be a fact as the overwhelming population of the states professed Hindu religion. Thus the changes of federation coming into effect were most meagre, and with all its limitations had little to inspire confidence in the achievement of Dominion Status.

The Bill did not satisfy the liberal opinion in Great Britain either. Atlee, the leader of the Labour Party, was unhappy at the omission of direct mention of Dominion Status and expressed misgivings about its reception in India. In his view the Bill was rigid, inflexible and incapable of growth. He said in the House of Commons, that it had "the large number of reservations. The keynote of the Bill is mistrust. There is no trust at all. India is not to have control of her foreign affairs and of her finances. Indians in the Provinces are not fit to deal with terrorism. The whole note struck by the Bill throughout is not that here we start a constitution which is going to be worked by Indians, but some kind of consultation with restrictions of every kind all the time. In fact one thing which seems to be left out of the Bill is the Indian people..... There is inequality of status running right through the Bill". He was right in assuming that the constitution might be "merely acquiesced in by a certain number of people, which may be worked by a privileged class, but which will not be supported by any of the advanced parties in India or any of the people who really want a change....Indians must take the responsibility for the future government of their country. The Bill does not do that, and cannot do it.'. The new Act was so devised as to

promise a chance for keeping India within "the Empire for ever". Another critic of the Act was Professor Berridale Keith, an eminent authority on constitutional development of India. He called the provincial part of it as "a hybrid product" full "of special responsibilities and acts to be done according to individual judgment". The federal scheme, according to him, was intended "to provide an element of pure conservatism in order to combat any dangerous elements of democracy contributed by British India..... It is difficult to deny the contention in India that federation was largely evoked by the desire to evade the issue of extending responsible government to the central government of British India. Moreover, the withholding of defence and external affairs from federal control, inevitable as the course is, renders the alleged concession of responsibility all but meaningless".

The reception in India was one of unwelcome for the new Act had disappointed the expectations of the political elite and had baffled all hopes which were entertained at the time of the Round Table Conference. The Indian National Congress had adopted independence or Purna Swaraj as its goal and would test any constitutional change on that touchstone. The Liberals had pledged their faith in Dominion Status and the Muslim League would judge of its suitability by the measure of its effectiveness in conceding the special position of the Muslims in the future set up. The Hindu Mahasabha was unhappy at the Communal Award and the Sikhs were none too happy. The first salvo was fired in the Indian Legislative Assembly on the motion for consideration of the report of the Joint Select Committee of the Parliament. Scathing criticism came from all sides of the opposition. Bhulabai, Desai, Jinnah and Aney, leaders of the Swarajist, Independent and the Nationalist parties, respectively, denounced the recommendations. Jinnah's amendment which was accepted by the majority and had the support of all the other parties, declared the federation as "fundamentally bad and totally unacceptable to the people of British India", and termed the scheme for provincial government as "most unsatisfactory and disappointing". It asked His Majesty's Government "not to proceed with any legislation based on this scheme and urged that immediate efforts should be made to consider how best to establish in British India alone

a real and complete Responsible Government". Then followed the session of the Hindu Mahasabha in April 1935 where also the Bill was condemned as "reactionary and obstructive to the growth of nationalism and democracy", therefore unacceptable to Indian opinion. The All-India Muslim League in April 1936 lodged a strong protest against the enforcement of the new Act as it considered the provincial scheme as "worthless and infelicitous" and the federation as "mischievous and evil". Its president Saiyed Wazir Hasan called the Act as "anti-democratic" which would "strengthen all the most reactionary elements in the country, and, instead of helping to develop on progressive lines, it will enchain and crush the forces working for democracy and freedom". Similarly, the National Liberal Federation, in December 1935, felt disappointed at the imposition of the Act which did "not approximate to the constitution of the Dominions and concede to the people of India the full rights of national self-government with the irreducible minimum of reservations for a short period fixed by statute and which further does not make for national solidarity". The most vehement opposition came from the Congress which uncompromisingly stood for complete independence as declared in 1929. At its banned session on March 31, 1933 at Calcutta it characterised the White Paper as "inimical to the vital interests of India" as it "is devised to perpetuate foreign domination in the country", while reiterating its faith in complete independence. In June 1934, the Working Committee again condemned the proposals of the White Paper as falling "far short of the Congress goal, if it does not retard the progress towards it". It registered the demand for a Constituent Assembly to frame the constitution of India. Further the Working Committee again at its meeting in Patna in December 1934 reiterated its rejection of the White Paper scheme and condemned the Joint Parliamentary Committee scheme as designed "to facilitate and perpetuate the domination and exploitation of this country by alien people under a costly mask". Hence it called for rejection of the said scheme of government and appealed to the "nation to support the Congress in every step that it may decide upon to secure the national objective of Purna Swaraj". At its various meetings the Congress and its Working Committee made no secret of their rejection of the new Act because of its being a distant cry from

its demand for independence and its failure to establish full responsible government.

But curiously enough, while rejecting the Constitution as unsatisfactory in parts or as a whole, the various political parties and Communal organisations were yet contemplating to work it, even though with reservations. The most characteristic case is that of the Congress. As early as July 1933, when mass civil disobedience had been withdrawn and individual civil disobedience beginning with Gandhiji was launched, and a "regular stream of civil resisters" had gone to jail, opinion was crystallising for reviving the Swarajist programme of entry into the legislatures. This alternative was considered as "a way out of what was held to be a stalemate" under Ordinance rule in the country. Hence a move was made to summon a Conference of Congress leaders who subscribed to this opinion. It met in Delhi on 31 March 1933 with Dr. Ansari as its president, and resolved to revive the All-India Swaraj Party which had been in abeyance since 1929, so as to enable those who did not participate in individual civil disobedience to organise the electorate, carry out the constructive programme defined by Gandhiji and take part in the forthcoming elections to the Legislative Assembly. A deputation comprising Ansari, Bhulabhai Desai and Bidhan Chand Roy met Gandhiji at Patna to seek his approval, which he conveyed in his letter of April 5, 1934, to Dr. Ansari. He welcomed the revival of the Swaraj Party and the decision to take part in the elections to the Assembly. In that context he wrote that his views about the utility of legislatures were the same as in 1920, yet he felt "that it is not only the right but it is the duty of every Congressman who, for some reason or other, does not want to or cannot take part in civil resistance and who has faith in entry into the Legislatures, to seek entry and form combinations in order to prosecute the programme which he or they believed to be in the interest of the country". He promised them assistance also. Along with this, Gandhiji issued a statement withdrawing civil disobedience for "Swaraj as distinguished from specific grievances", and called upon the civil resisters "to be ready for the call whenever it comes". Till then "they must learn the art and beauty of self-denial and voluntary purity". Moreover "they must engage themselves in nation-

building activities", which he defined as propagation of Khaddar, handspinning and weaving, spread of communal unity, banishing of untouchability, spread of total abstinence from intoxicating drinks and drugs and cultivating personal purity. As a sequel to Gandhiji's endorsement of the Swarajist resolve, the Ranchi Conference which met on 2 and 3 May, 1934, adopted a programme of action. It confirmed the resolution to contest Assembly elections with the object of rejecting the White-Paper summoning the Constituent Assembly for preparing the National Demand and repealing the repressive laws. Further the Swaraj Party was enjoined to secure "repeal of all acts and regulations that impede the healthy growth of the Nation and speedy attainment of Purna Swaraj", release of all political prisoners and resist all "acts and proposals for legislative enactments which may be calculated to exploit the country." Village organisation, reform of the condition of labour and matters concerning currency, exchange and agriculture, as well as prosecution of constructive programme were other functions for the Swarajists. For the purpose of running and controlling elections on behalf of the Congress a Parliamentary Board was formed by the All-India Congress Committee which met at Patna a fortnight later. Thus the Congress had adopted council entry as its direct programme and, when the new Constitution was enacted, the inclination to work it was not lacking. This position was clearly defined by the Faizpur Congress in December 1936. It reiterated its opposition to the federal part of the Act particularly because of the safeguards and the overriding powers of the Governor-General. Hence it resolved not "to submit to this Constitution or to cooperate with it" and decided "to combat it both inside and outside the legislatures so as to end it". Hence decision was taken to contest the elections but the question of acceptance of office was left for consideration after the general elections. The Muslim League also denounced the new Constitution with its safeguards which made a nullity of responsible government, and opposed the federal part as injurious to the interests of the Muslims, but wanted to utilise "the provincial scheme of the constitution.... for what it is worth" in view of the "conditions prevailing at present in the country". The National Liberal Federation, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Unionist Party in Panjab and the

Krishak Praja Party in Bengal decided to participate fully in the programme of provincial autonomy.

The British Government announced that the new Act would come into operation on April 1, 1937, consequently elections to the provincial legislatures were held early in 1937. The Congress election manifesto referred to the growing poverty of the country and "progressive deterioration" in the condition of all classes of the people. Mention was made of the national struggle and its repression by the Government. It stressed the objective of rejecting the Act of 1935 and replacing it by one framed by a constituent assembly elected by the people on the basis of adult suffrage. Hence the programme was laid down for ending the oppressive acts, ordinances and regulations, establishing civil liberty, releasing all political prisoners and repairing the wrong done to the peasantry. In particular the line of action to be pursued was to comprehend "transformation of the agrarian system, scaling down of rural debts, providing cheap credit", improvement of the standard of living of industrial labour, removal of sex disabilities, uplift of scheduled classes, solution of communal tangle, and encouragement of Khaddar and village industries. The aim was defined as "to free India, end the exploitation of the people, and build up a strong and prosperous and united nation, resting on the well-being of the masses". Improvement of the condition of rural population and other backward classes was clearly laid down as the object of going to the legislatures. The election manifesto of the Muslim League was similar in its content and the ultimate object. There was emphasis on "full responsible government for India", rejection of the Act of 1935, but acceptance of the communal award. The programme as outlined included protection of religious rights, repeal of all repressive laws, reduction of the heavy cost of administrative machinery, allocation of substantial funds for nation-building activities, nationalisation of the army and reduction of military expenditure, encouragement and development of industries including cottage industries, and regulating currency and exchange directed to the economic development of the country. It laid stress on the "educational and economic uplift of the rural population", relief of agricultural indebtedness and free and compulsory elementary education. Further the aim of



the Muslim League was "to devise measures for the amelioration of the general condition of the Musalmans, and to take steps to relieve the heavy burden of taxation and create healthy public opinion and general political consciousness throughout the country". There was also reference to the protection of Urdu language and script. In essence the Muslim League programme also tilted towards rural development and improvement of the condition of the weaker classes. There was thus little difference in the aims and programmes of the Congress and the Muslim League, and harmonious and united action was naturally expected to result from it. Some other signs were there which strengthened the hope of co-operation between the Congress and the League in the new legislatures. The Congress had refused to condemn the communal award, even at the risk of a split in its ranks and by "adopting a neutral attitude" had "left the door open for communal understanding". Jinnah and his Independent Party composed of Muslims in the Indian Legislative Assembly had generally voted with the Congress on crucial questions against the official bloc. The Jamait-ul-Ulema, which had consistently supported the Congress had joined the Muslim League, as reformed then, and there was reason to presume greater harmony between the Congress and the League, particularly in view of the desire of Jinnah and some others, who were Congressmen and had broken away from it only on the issue of safeguards for Muslims, for cooperation with the Congress. There was little difference in their views which were as radical as of the Congress. Hence a strong section in the latter advocated coalition with the League, and accordingly, as Dr. Tara Chand has observed, Congress Muslims and those of "radical persuasion were encouraged by the Congress leaders to stand on behalf of the League so that they might constitute an advanced wing within the Party". And "although no formal agreement was effected, many on both sides believed that after the elections if the question of office acceptance was satisfactorily settled, they would act in cooperation".

During the elections the Congress and the League had to fight against the reactionary parties of vested interests, like taluqdar and Zamindars in the United Provinces, Justice Party in Madras, the Unionist Party in Panjab and similar sections in

Bengal. "There was", thus as Dr. Tara Chand has rightly stated, "hardly any clash or rivalry between the Congress and the League. Both were opposed by the same groups". The Congress achieved unexpected success in the elections, when it captured 711 out of 808 general seats, besides 26 out of 482 of the Muslim seats. It had gained absolute majority in Madras, Bihar, Central Provinces, United Provinces and Orissa, where its percentage varied between 74 and 100. In Bombay it was the largest single party having 86 out of 175 seats so also in the North-West Frontier Province it had 19 out of 50 members, in Assam 33 out of 108 and 60 out of 250 seats in Bengal. Except for Panjab and Sind the Congress had fared very well. Similarly the Muslim League found little support in Panjab, Sind and North-West Frontier Province, the Muslim majority provinces. In Bengal it had better record 40 out of 119. But in the United Provinces, it gained 27 out of 64 Muslim seats, in Bombay 20 out of 29 and in Madras 11 out of 28. It had fared better than the Congress in Muslim constituencies, but on the whole its success was modest securing not more than 26 per cent of the total Muslim seats. The electorate overwhelmingly sided with progressive groups and clearly exhibited its resolve to gain freedom from cramping British imperialism. It voted for a radical socio-economic programme on which base future structure of Indian democracy was to be raised.

The elections completed, the next stage in natural sequence was that of forming governments to operate provincial autonomy, however limited in its scope. According to the constitution and normal convention of parliamentary democracy, it was the right and obligation of the majority party to form the ministry. The Congress had obtained such a majority in the provinces of Madras, Orissa, Central Provinces, Bihar and United Provinces, while its position in Bombay and Assam verged on majority. But the Congress was committed to the principle of wrecking the constitution and fully exposing its deficiencies and unsatisfactoriness as a step conducive to the attainment of independence which was the goal. Jawaharlal Nehru and the Congress Socialists were opposed to office acceptance and thereby working the new constitution. In his presidential address at the Lucknow Congress, Nehru had vehemently rejected office acceptance. He then said, "to accept

office and ministry under the conditions of the Act, is to negative our rejection of it and to stand self-condemned. National honour and self-respect cannot accept that position, for it would inevitably mean our cooperation in some measure with the repressive apparatus of imperialism, and we would become partners in the repression and in the exploitation of our people". He believed it "would be a vital error" to accept office or even to hesitate about it, for "it will be a pit from which it would be difficult for us to come out". But a large section in the Congress did not subscribe to this view, and they were lured by the prospect of office which might open avenues for promoting welfare of the people. Hence at the close of 1936 at the Faizpur session, the issue of office acceptance was deferred to be decided by the All-India Congress Committee after the elections were over. The preponderant majorities in so many provinces gave added strength to the protagonists of office acceptance who considered it "as the inevitable corollary of participation in the elections". The decision for the All-India Congress Committee meeting in Delhi in March 1937 was no easy one as opposition was no less vehement and counted Nehru and many other prominent members in it. Hence on the initiative of Mahatma Gandhi a formula was devised which left the way open for office acceptance while hedging it in a manner with serious obstacles. The resolution after explaining fully the Congress policy read as follows : "And on the pending question of office acceptance and in pursuance of the policy summed up in the foregoing paragraphs, the All India Congress Committee authorises and permits the acceptance of office in provinces where Congress commands a majority in the legislatures provided that the leader of the Congress party in the Legislature is satisfied and is in a position to state publicly that the Governor will not use his special powers of interference or set aside the advice of the Ministers in regard to their constitutional activities". Masani is right in believing that it "left the position very nebulous indeed", but it was generally accepted. As a consequence when leaders of the Congress party were invited by the respective Governors to form ministries, they made a demand for assurance from him that "he will not use, in regard to the constitutional activities of the Cabinet, his special powers of interference or set aside the

advice of my Cabinet". It meant that the Governor was required to abrogate his special powers and would not "exercise the functions which are by law left to his discretion or individual judgement".

The demand was rejected by all the Governors acting under instructions from their superiors. Their stand-point may be gathered from the communique issued by the Secretary to the Governor of Madras, which clearly explained the reasons for this decision. He felt it "impracticable for constitutional reasons...to divest himself of the responsibilities and duties which have been placed upon his shoulders by Parliament and that it was therefore not within his power to give any such guarantee". It was stated "that the terms of the statute are mandatory and that the obligations imposed by the Act and by Instrument of Instructions on Governors in respect of the use of special powers are of such a nature that even if he wished to relieve himself of them, it would not be in his power to do so". Nevertheless the Governor assured Rajagopalachari of his full "help, sympathy and support" "within the four corners of the Government of India Act", and professed his absolute impartiality in relation to the party complexion of the ministry. And to give time for reconsideration of the position, an interim ministry drawn from the minority elements was formed to hold office till the formation of a ministry with majority support. This decision, however, temporary, was a positive violation of the spirit of the Act and disclosed the will of the British Government not to part with the substance of power. However, the Congress was also endeavouring by this manœuvre to sidetrack the constitution and compel the British Government to yield full responsible government in the provincial sphere. The Congress viewpoint was explained in two similar statements by Rajagopalachari and Mahatma Gandhi. The former explained that what he desired was that the "Cabinet should be given the fullest freedom of action inside the scope of Provincial Autonomy" and that during its period of office, the Governor "would not use his special powers of interference or set aside the advice of his Ministers". He explained further that there was no wish for any "amendment of the statute now and here or any extension of the limited scope of Provincial Autonomy", and without infringement of safeguards "as

regards possible interference from the Secretary of State and the Viceroy, there would be a mere gentleman's agreement between the Governor and the Prime Minister that the former would not "put in motion" his "own discretionary powers of interference as a Provincial Governor". For he argued that if a discretion is given to the Governor to use certain powers, he should have the discretion not to use them.

Mahatma Gandhi who confessed to be the "sole author of the office-acceptance clause" and the originator of the condition for its acceptance, clarified its purpose and meaning in his statement of 31 March. He wrote, "My desire was not to lay down any impossible condition. On the contrary, I wanted to devise a condition that could be easily accepted by the Governors. There was no intention whatsoever to lay down conditions whose acceptance would mean the slightest abrogation of the constitution...The object.....was, pending the creation by means consistent with the Congress creed and non-violence of a situation that would transfer all power to the people to work in offices so as to strengthen the Congress which has been shown to predominantly represent mass opinion". This object was possible of achievement only by the "gentlemanly understanding between the Governor and their Congress Ministers, that they would not exercise their special powers of interference so long as the Ministers acted within the Constitution. Not to do so would be to court an almost immediate deadlock after entering upon office". He made it clear that flouting the majority ended autonomy as envisaged by the Constitution. The refusal of the simple formula would mean continuance of "rule of the sword not of the pen". He claimed that his formula "might have prevented the crisis and resulted in a natural, orderly and peaceful transfer of power from the bureaucracy to the largest and fullest democracy known to the world". But the new Act was not conceived to facilitate that end. While the interim ministries functioned in a halting manner after their introduction on April 1, a controversy started on the legality and feasibility or otherwise of the Congress demand. On April 8, in the House of Lords, the Secretary of State explained the government position, by emphasising that while the ministers were entitled from the Governors to "fullest support possible within the framework

of the Constitution, Parliament had imposed upon them certain obligations of which, without the authority of Parliament, they could not divest themselves". Hence the Congress demand could not be met without an amendment of the Constitution. And in his illustration of the implications of the Congress demand raised the matter of protection of minorities which was a major obligation included in the safeguards. Finally "he concluded that the reserve powers were an integral part of the Constitution, and could not be abrogated by Parliament, and the Governors could not treat the Congress as a privileged body exempt from the provisions of the Constitution by which all other parties were bound". Here it may be pertinent to add that the regular ministries in Panjab, Bengal and Sind had assumed office and no such demands were presented by them.

As the controversy thickened, there was considerable thinning down of the line of separation between the two opposing viewpoints. Gandhiji admitted it was Governor's duty to interfere in case a minister made a "stupid blunder" harming the people, and in that context added, that the Governor "would reason with his Minister, and, if he did not listen, he would dismiss the Cabinet. The assurance contemplates non-interference, not non-dismissal. But dismissal, when there is a clear majority in the Assembly, would mean dissolution and a fresh election". And he explained further that "for an honourable resignation there must be an honourable cause that anybody could see". Assurance was required to save ministers from pin-pricks which would provide no occasion for resignation. On the other side Mr. Butler, the Under Secretary of State, cleared the position by stating that, "It is certainly not the intention that Governors, by any narrow or legalistic interpretation of their own responsibilities, should encroach upon the wide powers which it was the purpose of Parliament to place in the hands of the Ministers and which is our desire they should use in furtherance of the programmes they advocated". Two days later, the Congress Working Committee in its resolution made clear that no amendment of the Act was contemplated and reiterated that in view of the past record of the British Government and its present attitude, without assurances, as demanded, the "popular Ministers will be unable to function properly and without irritating interference". It was plainly emphasised that "the right of the

Governor to dismiss the ministry or dissolve the Provincial Assembly" in case of serious differences was not disputed. Then added that "the Committee has grave objection to the Ministers having to submit to interference by the Governor with the alternative of themselves having to resign their office instead of the Governors taking the responsibility of dismissing them". A few days later Zetland also was in a conciliatory mood when he declared in Parliament that "if the relations between the Governor and his Ministry are those of partners in a common enterprise, there can be no possible question of the Governors interfering constantly in the responsibilities and work of the Ministry".

At this stage Gandhiji had also advanced many steps to bridge the gulf. His interpretation of the assurance was that in a situation which appeared to the Governors to be intolerable, "they would take upon their shoulders the responsibility of dismissing Ministries, which they have a right to do, instead of expecting them to resign or submit to the Governor's wishes". And ultimately he watered it down to "demand his Ministers resignation" instead of dismissing them. He made it clear that even then if the deadlock was not cleared, the only alternative would be to have recourse to Section 93 and suspend the "democratic portion of the constitution", as "he preferred open oppression under a state of autocracy to veiled oppression of and interference with Congress Ministries". Zetland's speeches in early June showed further mellowing down and the British press demanded fruitful negotiations with the Congress to end the impasse. This ultimately led to the holding of the olive branch and ending the controversy by the Viceroy Linlithgow. In his message of 21 June 1937, he clarified the position by stating that, "under Provincial Autonomy, in all matters falling within the ministerial field, including the position of the minorities, the services etc., the Governor will ordinarily be guided in the exercise of his powers by the advice of his Ministers and that those Ministers will be responsible not to Parliament but to the Provincial Legislature". He further said that "within the limited area of his special responsibilities the Governor is directly responsible to Parliament whether he accepts or does not accept the advice of his Ministers". In the event of non-acceptance of such advice the "responsibility for his decision is

his and his alone", and the Ministers have a right to state publicly that "they take no responsibility for that decision or even that they have advised the Governor in an opposite sense". Elaborating further he admitted that in case of serious disagreement between the Governor and Ministers, on matters of "really major importance,.....of such a character that a Ministry would feel that their credit and their position were hopelessly compromised" and no agreement was reached between the Governor and Ministers, on matters of "really major importance .....of such a character that a Ministry would feel that their credit and their position were hopelessly compromised" and no agreement was reached between the two with their separate responsibilities, "then the Ministry must either resign or be dismissed", and stated that between the two options "Constitutional practice leans heavily to the side of resignation". The Viceroy hoped that deadlock would not occur and that the two sides would "leave nothing undone to avoid or to resolve such conflicts". In case of the stalemate he regretted the inevitability of the suspension of the constitution in many provinces. This statement was considered to be the farthest limit to which the British Government could go and that it must be regarded as "final authoritative interpretation of the intentions of the Government of India". With that the way was cleared for the formation of Congress ministries, and the Congress Working Committee, by a majority, against the opposition of Jawaharlal Nehru and Congress Socialists, adopted a resolution on 7 July permitting the Congressmen to "accept office wherever they may be invited thereto". In support of this decision it stated that while the British declarations fell far short of the assurance demanded, "it will not be easy for the Governors to use their special powers" in the "situation and circumstances" as then created. With this ended the impasse, the interim ministries resigned and Congress ministries were inducted in seven provinces. Whether the Congress gained any substantial benefit from this long controversy is a debatable question. All that can be said, however, is that it gained in prestige and made it impossible for the Governors, even if they so desired, to normally interfere in the work of the ministries but were prepared for accommodation to its farthest limit. In a way there was a breach in the Act as originally conceived and



was cleared for the exercise of responsible government in the provinces to a large extent. One fact is evident that both sides were inclined to climb down from their initial obstinate positions. The Government wished to avoid failure of the constitutional experiment in view of the international situation and internal economic deterioration as well as growing influence of radical socialist and communist parties. The Congress was also keen to avoid recourse to aggressive civil disobedience in the then situation of the country and a large number of its members wished to wield office to restructure the economic life and promote constructive activities to prepare the country for eventual struggle for independence.

With the end of one impasse, however, there began another conflict which was pregnant with tragic consequences. The ministry making led to serious differences with the Muslim League. In the elections the League, by itself did not fare well in the Muslim majority provinces of Panjab, Sind and North-West Frontier, where it was practically routed. In Bengal it had gained 40 out of 119 Muslim seats, but in alliance with the Krishak Praja Party of Fazlul Haq it commanded the majority. In United Provinces it gained 29 out of 64 seats, the remaining being shared by Independents and Agriculturist Party. The Congress obtained only one Muslim seat. In Bihar also the position was similar and in Bombay and Madras it had captured 20 out of 29 and 11 out of 28, respectively. In the Central Provinces there was little scope for the Muslim League. In the matter of the formation of ministries, thus, main problem was that of the United Provinces and Bihar, particularly in the former, where the Congress leadership had directed many of its Muslim members to seek election under the banner of the League. By the constitution the Governors were required to see that the minorities got due representation in the Cabinet, but there was no mention that such members must be independent of the Congress. There was no special direction for forcing the principle of coalition. The essential elements of the Cabinet system are its homogeneity and collective responsibility. Could these be possible with a heterogenous composition of the Cabinet ? Therefore the problem before the Congress leadership with its majority in the legislatures, was whether to adhere rigidly to the principle

of homogeneity, unmindful of the consequences, or to accommodate the Muslim League, whose policy and programme were not at that time, different from those of the Congress, as is quite evident from the similarity of their election manifestoes. Also in early 1937, the Muslim League had the support of progressive Muslim groups, like the Khilafatists, Ahrars and others and stood for national self-government and economic reconstruction oriented towards the improvement of the lot of the under-privileged. Jinnah had been brought into the League in 1934, and under his direction it had shaken off its earlier complexion of being a party of landlords. He had then expressed friendliness towards the Congress and declared, "ours is not a hostile movement.....We are willing to cooperate, we are willing to coalasce with any group or groups, provided their ideals, their objects are approximately the same as ours". He stood for Hindu Muslim unity and declared for freedom of the country as did the Congress. Apart from Jinnah, in the United Provinces, Khaliqazzaman, the leader of the Muslim League, was a Congressman and so were many others returned on the League ticket; and they had been so directed by the Congress. It was therefore naturally expected that in the formation of the Cabinet they would be treated equally with the other Congressmen. He met Jawaharlal Nehru on May 12, hoping for cooperation between the two bodies, but no agreement was possible. Later discussions also proved infructuous and coalition was not effected. Abul Kalam Azad defined the conditions of cooperation which were that the Muslim League group should "cease to function as a separate group" and the then Parliamentary Board be dissolved. Both these conditions were humiliating and suicidal for the League, hence some modification was made therein and Khaliquzzaman and Ismail Khan were prepared to accept them with the stipulation that "the Muslim League Party members in the U.P. Assambly will be free to vote in accordance with their conscience on communal matters" such as "religion, religious ceremonies, language, culture, services, etc.". This was not acceptable to Congress leardership, and ultimately all efforts at unity were wrecked on Nehru's rigid adherence to the principle of homogeneity and collective responsibility, unmindful of the realities of the situation and his shortsightedness about its

future consequences. His plea that his programme of land reform might have been hindered by the inclusion of the Muslim League in the Cabinet, as it "represented some big land-owners", was an excuse without foundation. Nehru had ostensibly backed out of an earlier understanding made with the League leadership in the United Provinces, and thereby gave a serious jolt to it and made it irrevocably hostile to the Congress and its ideal of national unity. One may agree with Azad that in this matter, Nehru owing to his obsession with "theoretical considerations" under-estimated "the realities of the situation". The example of U.P. was followed in Bihar and other Congress majority provinces, so that the Muslim League was excluded from any share in the power of decision making. And from this movement the cry for a separate state, and separate nation of the Muslims, gained in strength leading ultimately to the division of the country. The British rulers were perhaps happy at this deep schism between the two communities and did nothing to prevent it in its early stages, rather they encouraged Muslim intransigence.

Apart from the frustration caused by Nehru's irreconcilable attitude in the matter of inclusion of League nominees in the Cabinet, his statements and programme of mass contact, along with the slight caused to the self-importance of Jinnah, embittered the latter and made him an uncompromising adversary of the Congress and vehement advocate of the two-nation theory. Nehru had told Khaliquzzaman that the Hindu-Muslim question "was confined to a few Muslim intellectuals, landlords and capitalists cooking up a problem which did not in fact exist in the minds of the masses". He ridiculed the idea of Muslims acting as a separate group "in politics and social and economic matters" and claimed that he knew more about the Muslim masses, "their hunger and poverty and misery than those who talk in terms of percentages and seats in the Councils and places in the State service." This was a clear insinuation that Jinnah and the League did not represent the Muslim masses. Nehru's statement that "in the final analysis there are only two forces in India today—British imperialism and the Congress representing Indian nationalism" completely ignored the League. Then came his programme of contact with the Muslim masses on "the basis of economic questions". The success of this move would

have destroyed the base of the Muslim League, and therefore would have exploded the entire structure which was then being built by Jinnah. In his statement at the All-India National Convention in Delhi on March 19, 1937, Nehru clearly asserted that the peasants whether Hindu or Muslim "are turning to the Congress to seek relief from the innumerable burdens and their future cooperation is assured, provided we approach them rightly on the basis of economic questions." He was merely affirming the conviction which lay at the base of the Congress that India was one nation and that all people living in the country, irrespective of their religious or economic professions formed one community. All these statements were enough to stiffen the back of Jinnah, for recognition of the Congress as the sole organisation of the people of India would smash the very foundation of the League. A strong advocate of Indian unity, Jinnah now turned his face against it and took up the cry that the Muslims "shall be recognised as a sub-nationality possessing its own culture, language, religion, traditions and personal laws, which involved separate political interests and hence constitutional safeguards". There was little difference in the attitude of the League and the Congress towards the new Act earlier; but in 1937, frustrated by the refusal of Nehru to form coalition with the League members in the provincial Cabinets, Jinnah claimed that there was nothing in common between the Hindus and Muslims and that they were two separate nations, and the Muslim nation must have a separate state for its self-realisation. With his stout support the visionary school-boyish plan of a separate Muslim state, called Pakistan, by a Cambridge University student Rahmat Ali Chowdhry and later the scheme of autonomous states propounded by Iqbal became the war-cry of the Muslim League. The ultra-conservatives led by Churchill played the supporting role mainly to keep a hold on India, even if the Congress succeeded in winning Swaraj. Iqbal had put forth the suggestion of the redistribution of India so as to carve out one or more Muslim states with absolute majorities so as to be able to solve the problems of the Muslim masses. Jinnah needed no such spurs and to spite the Congress and its leadership took up vehemently the cause of a separate Muslim state, for as he declared at Lucknow in October 1937, the Congress governments

in the provinces had shown "by their words, deeds and programme" that the Muslims could not hope for "justice or fair play at their hands". He called the mass contact programme of the Congress as calculated to divide the Muslims. He assured the Musalmans of the cooperation of the League in the task of their uplift socially, economically and politically. He charged the British Government of flagrant breach of the constitutional obligation in the matter of the appointment of Muslim ministers. In his presidential address at Lucknow he blamed the Hindu leadership of indifference to settlement with the Muslims and in that context asserted, "honourable settlements can only be achieved between equals, and unless the two parties learn to respect and fear each other, there is no solid ground for settlement....all safeguards and settlements would be a scrap of paper unless they are backed up by power. Politics means power and not relying on cries of justice or fair play or goodwill". A separate Muslim state was the answer, the repository of that power, and henceforth Jinnah strove to achieve it.

Congress ministries in the three provinces of United Provinces Bihar and Central Provinces, in their enthusiasm for economic, social and educational reform, took some measures which were misrepresented by the League as directed against the Muslims and aimed at crushing their culture and language. The attempt in many places to haul the Congress flag as national flag on government buildings, the singing of Bande Matram song, and the effort to promote Hindi, were some of the measures which were highlighted as hostile to Muslim interests. Mahatma Gandhi's basic education plan with its emphasis on work experience along with elementary education, was also depicted to be prejudicial to Muslims, and the Vidya Mandir scheme in the Central Provinces came for vehement denunciation as inimical to Muslims. The League appointed a committee under Raja of Pirpur to investigate all such instances in the working of the Congress governments in United Provinces and Bihar which were against the interests of the Muslims. A long list of such cases was prepared, and though there was little substance in the allegations, these were repeated indefinitely, and as Gobbels had pointed out a falsehood repeated constantly assumes the garb of truth. The Muslim opinion throughout the country was infected

by the venom of communal hatred against the Hindus and the Congress. Thus Jinnah gained support among the Muslims and the non-League political parties in Bengal, Panjab, Assam joined the Muslim League and thereby strengthened it and made it virtually the sole political organisation of the Muslims. The British rulers also lent it their full weight to defeat the Congress and frustrate its efforts to gain independence for the country. All endeavours at accommodation made by Nehru, Rajendra Prasad and even Gandhiji failed to impress Jinnah. Hence when the War came in 1939 and the Congress ministries were asked to resign by their High Command, the Muslim League observed the day as one of victory. The breach was almost complete so that independence of India was inextricably tied up with the demand for the partition of the country so as to create a separate Muslim state.

The Muslim problem was not the only one which generated fissiparous tendencies. The communally conscious Hindu organisations, like the Hindu Mahasabha and Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh, a militant body, were frankly opposed to the Muslim League ideology and worked assiduously at Hindu solidarity and their organisation into a solid brotherhood, ready to assume aggressive action to safeguard the unity of India and the identity and security of the Hindus. There was also a distinct organisation of the Scheduled Castes under the leadership of Ambedkar which wanted a separate identity for them and was opposed to the Congress. There was the Justice Party in Madras and in Bihar there cropped up the Adibasi-Mahasabha under Jaipal Singh which campaigned for a separate province of Chota-Nagpur and Santhal Parganas. Landlord organisations were also formed under the inspiration provided by the officials to safeguard their particular interests and thereby oppose the Congress whose policies and programmes were oriented towards the uplift of the peasants and protection of their rights. But the presence of leftist elements in the Congress and the emergence of separate bodies of peasants and industrial workers, with Communist leadership or under Socialists, who had formed a wing in the Congress under the caption of Congress Socialists, posed a threat, even though mild initially, to Congress ideology and its endeavour at united national action to win Swaraj. Gandhiji had separated himself from the

Congress in 1935, and though his advice and even guidance were always available he did not control the deliberations of the Congress bodies. The Congress Socialists with Jawaharlal Nehru, Acharya Narendra Dev, Ashok Mehta and Achyut Patwardhan had formed their separate organisation and from that plank sought to influence Congress thinking and convert it to their views. This party was formed in 1934. It stood for complete independence for India, the Convocation of a Constituent Assembly to draw up the Constitution and the establishment of a socialist society. Their view was "that the daily struggles of workers, peasants and other exploited classes for their immediate economic and political demands are an integral part of the struggle for independence." This involved organisation of workers, peasants and other exploited masses, including people of the Indian States so that a powerful mass movement might be created to achieve independence. Subsequently many organisations were formed to represent the interests of workers, peasants, students, and others. At the same time Trade Unions also came to be a strong force and a number of strikes were organised which, though defeated, mark considerable growth in their power. Kisan Sabhas also were formed in United Provinces and other provinces and an All India Kisaan Sabha was organised to act as the united forum to ventilate the grievances and press the demands of the peasants. Essentially their attack was directed against the landlords. They asked for reduction in rent, security of tenure and economic and social betterment of the agricultural community. In the initial stages both the Trade Unions and the Kisan Sabhas, though influenced by Communist leadership adhered in allegiance to the Congress. All these bodies, peasants, workers, students and such others were frankly anti-imperialist and helped to swell the volume of the struggle for independence. But it may not be impertinent to hold that their emergence was bound to affect the character of national struggle. Most of these were not wedded to the creed of non-violence and their revolutionary wings, whether among the Congress Socialists, Communists, Kisan Sabhas or Trade Unions, subscribed to violence and were prepared to resort to it when occasion arose for it.

It was in this background of communal division and atomisation of political life that the Congress ministries worked in the

seven provinces. From all evidence and testimony of the Governors, with whom the ministers worked, it must be said that the Congress ministries, as Hodson has aptly put it, despite handicaps of "financial stringency as well as the need to balance the interests of different sections of their supporters", made, in the matter of social and economic reforms, considerable advances which "could not have been made by an alien government dependent, as such must be, on the support of vested interests". Provincial governors, particularly Harry Haig of United Provinces, and Erskine of Madras, paid glowing tributes to their work. The Secretary of State was happy at "the great constitutional success of provincial autonomy in India", and the Viceroy lauded the "distinguished record of public achievement" under these ministries. The most pressing problem was that of the agriculturists whose condition specially in the United Provinces and Bihar was deplorable, and the situation was growing tense owing to the emergence of Kisan Sabhas and peasant consciousness since 1920. Agrarian disturbances were on the increase and, unless suitable action was taken, might have created serious crises, particularly of law and order. The Congress had been conscious of their problems and in its election manifesto had clearly pledged itself to work for the amelioration of the condition of peasants. Particular reference was made to the need for "reduction in rent and revenue, fixity of tenure, relief from the burden of debt, etc.". The importance of the Kisan Sabhas had precipitated the issue and in Bihar as well as in United Provinces not only huge demonstrations were organised but symptoms of violence were quite evident. There were cases of burning of crops, looting of the landlord households, refusal to pay rent, forcible occupation of lands and constant threats to the zamindars. The situation demanded immediate solution. Hence the governments took up legislation, to improve the lot of tenants. In United Provinces Act XVII of 1939, which was the result of deep study and close investigation was enacted guaranteeing hereditary rights to tenants, fixity of rents for a period of ten years, security from ejection from holdings and abolishing forced labour and illegal cesses or abwabs. In Bihar also a law was passed by which rents were lowered, old system of assessment of rent was discontinued and the right of the landlords to eject occupancy tenants was curbed,



as also restraints were imposed in the matter of realising rents. In many provinces laws were passed for giving relief from debts. Laws were passed in Bombay, Central Provinces and North-West Frontier Province for reforms. "Adequate famine relief measures were prescribed and marketing facilities were extended". Thus a definite step was taken to help the tenants and by their personal influence the ministers were able to pacify them and prevent eruption of violent acts. This was no mean record and laid the foundation for much of agricultural reforms after independence. Similarly steps were taken to better the conditions of labour and many strikes which had gripped industry in towns like Bombay, Sholapur, Ahmedabad, Calcutta and Kanpur were resolved by the tact and firmness exhibited by the ministries. The Congress on its part appointed a Labour Committee which prepared a comprehensive programme of reforms pertaining to wages, housing, hours of work, paid holidays, employment insurance, maternity benefits, settlement of disputes and enforcement of the provisions of the Factory Acts. This wide programme could not be worked immediately but in many cases, when strikes were on, the governments appointed enquiry committees and implemented their recommendations. A Trade Disputes Act was passed in Bombay. Thus in these two fields, agriculture and industry, the Congress ministries by their sympathy for the tenant and worker and tactful handling of the situation helped to restore order. But the labour problem was closely identified with expansion of industry, requiring large investment and that was outside the jurisdiction of provincial governments. The Government of India was not yet in a mood to carry out any reforms in the direction. As Dr. Tara Chand has written, "the provincial governments could only tinker with small or medium scale industrial enterprise." The Congress Working Committee had appointed a committee to prepare an all-India industrial plan, but the tenure of these ministries was much too short to enable them to take up this matter earnestly.

The Congress programme on which basis elections had been fought was to expose the utter inadequacy of the new constitution to lead to the goal of independence. But with the success achieved in the elections, a strong section was inclined to work the machine to further its constructive programme and thereby

prepare the country for another round of struggle against imperialism. This desire had induced a spirit of compromise and adjustment and not unnecessarily create crises. That had led many to feel that the lure of power had affected Congressmen also. There may be some substance in it for it is true that those who came to scoff remained there to pray. Gandhiji, who had been the author of the formula for office acceptance, also wished to avoid conflict if that were honourably possible. The British rulers were also willing to abide by the terms of the settlement for in the then economic situation and the impending international crisis they were keen to avoid any conflict with the Congress for the alternative was to combat civil disobedience. Hence on both the sides spirit of accommodation prevailed and relations between the Governor and the ministry were normally harmonious. And in the general aspects of administration and in the schemes of socio-economic reform there was practically a marked absence of interference by the Governor. However one serious cause of dispute occurred on the question of release of political prisoners whose number was rather small in the Congress majority provinces. But the problem was there of Bengal and Panjab where not only the number of such detenus was considerable but the governments there were not inclined to release the revolutionary terrorist element; and the Governor-General was not prepared to endorse any action in one province which might have adverse repercussions in another. Also the British rulers dreaded recrudescence of seditious activities which had not been completely silenced inspite of repression and Congress insistence on non-violence. The Congress manifesto had promised release of such political prisoners and the Prime Ministers of U.P. and Bihar took early steps to implement it. There the problem was only of 14 and 23 prisoners, respectively. But in Bengal there were 300 detenus and 387 political prisoners and 44 in Panjab. The number in Assam was only 10 and 6 in Madras and 3 in Bombay. In February 1938, the Congress Working Committee was faced with the situation created by hunger-strike by some political prisoners in Dacca in Bengal, Hazaribagh in Bihar and some prisons of Panjab. One of them died in Dacca and the condition of many others was critical. The Committee publicly disapproved the method of hunger strike, but in view of its

concern for the release of all political prisoners, it instructed the Congress ministries privately to expedite their release even by a threat of resignation if necessary. On that basis the Prime Ministers of U.P. and Bihar advised the Governors to release them. The Governors reserved the matter for consideration by the Governor-General who issued instructions to Governors under section 126(5) of the Act to withhold their assent to the decision of their Cabinets. Thereupon the ministries tendered their resignations, and as Masani has rightly remarked, "before the Congress could make it an all-India issue, the Viceroy had by this intervention made it one". Law and order had been the responsibility of the ministry and as such intervention by the Governor-General in this matter, notwithstanding its repercussions else where, created undue interference in the discharge of their legitimate functions by the ministries in U.P. and Bihar. These resignations therefore created a crisis.

Govind Ballabh Pant in his letter of 15 February 1938 to the Governor made the position explicit. He wrote that as the latter was bound to abide by the orders of the Governor-General and "reject the advice which we thought it our duty to tender to you, in regard to the release of politicals, we think the only course open to us is to tender our resignations. The issue now raised is of the widest importance both from the constitutional and administrative point of view". He referred to the Congress manifesto which must have warned the Governor-General of the resolve of the ministries in this matter notwithstanding which assurance was given "that the Congress in office would be free to carry out its programme". The Governor did not disclose the reasons which determined his action, but as action was taken on extra-provincial considerations the Prime Minister inferred that there was no menace to public security in his province. Consequently Pant added, "No Council of Ministers can discharge its functions satisfactorily if its considered opinion is disregarded arbitrarily in respect of momentous questions strictly falling within its purview by an outside authority and when even the courtesy of mentioning the ground on which such interference is sought not shown to it". Such "interference in the ordinary administration of the province raises a constitutional issue of grave importance which

might imperil the peace of the country, and it brings vividly home to us the unsubstantial character of the autonomy which the provinces are supposed to enjoy". The endorsement of the British Government was made clear in the House of Commons. The Haripura Congress session was soon held and there the All-India Congress Committee decided to "extend the deadlock to other provinces". The Congress session also endorsed the action taken in U.P. and Bihar, but did not "desire to precipitate a crisis which may involve non-violent non-cooperation and direct action consistent with the Congress policy of truth and non-violence". It did not wish to instruct other Congress ministries to follow suit and advised the Viceroy to reconsider his decision. And finally asserted that "The latest action of the Governor-General not only exposes the utter inadequacy of the Act to bring real liberty to the people, but also shows the intention of the British Government to use and interpret it, not for the expansion of liberty but for its restriction", Gandhiji four days earlier had hoped that the Viceroy would retrace his steps and avert a crisis. British press did not also support the Viceroy's action and Gandhiji was not prepared to press the issue to its extreme end. Linlithgow's statement of 22 February 1938 was also relatively conciliatory. Referring to the danger that the step contemplated by the Congress ministries might "give an impetus to fresh terrorist organisation in Bengal" which prompted his action, he, however, denied any intention "to undermine the position of the Congress Ministries", and expressed the desire not to interfere "with the legitimate policy of a Congress or any other Government". He made it clear that the ministries were free "in consultation with Governors, to pursue the policy of release of prisoners and they must anticipate no difficulty now, any more than in the past, in securing the friendly and ready cooperation of Governors in individual examination". Thus ended the crisis and after individual examination of every case, political prisoners were released in Congress provinces. There was also fresh assurance of non-usurpation and non-interference "with the legitimate functions of the responsible Ministers". Thus the principle of complete ministerial responsibility was unequivocally reaffirmed. Another crisis might have developed in Orissa when one of the Commissioners was tipped to act as Governor during the period of

leave of the permanent incumbent, as the ministers were not prepared to work under their subordinate, but it was resolved by his transfer to another province and import of another person from outside. The prestige of the ministry and the special rights of the services were both thereby safeguarded. Elsewhere nothing was done to precipitate a crisis and till the date of the declaration of war in 1939, despite the vehement denunciation by the Muslim League and its efforts to seek their dismissal, the Congress ministries continued to function to the full satisfaction of the Governors and the people. Their "governments enjoyed stability" and dealt with matters of finance and administration with "a high sense of public duty and responsibility".

During the period that in India the experiment of provincial autonomy was carried on the horizon in Europe was darkened by the clouds of impending war. Since 1933, the aggressive intentions of Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy threatened the peace of Europe. Very rapidly Hitler built up considerable military strength in defiance of the clauses of the Versailles Treaty disarming Germany. A proud, self conscious nation could scarcely be pressed into a position of inferiority for long. Hence when Hitler seized power and stood forth as the supreme dictator, the Fuehrer, national pride asserted itself and the state made rapid strides in rearming itself. Its munition factories were in full swing. Compulsory military service was proclaimed, a strong air fleet was built and in 1935 with British consent the naval fleet was rebuilt. Early in 1936 the Rhineland was remilitarised and substantial aid was rendered to France in the Spanish Civil War. Meanwhile Mussolini was building his position in Italy and invaded Abyssinia as a step towards imperial expansion. Germany was no less expansive in its search for lebensraum with its definite programme of bringing all German speaking people under the German sway. In February 1938, Austria was united with Germany, and action was initiated to wrest German speaking Suedetanland from Czechoslovakia and in March 1939 that republic was repudiated and incorporated as part of Germany. Hitler had his plans ready for bringing the whole of Europe under his sway and had entered into a non-aggression pact with Russia by conceding to the eastern dictatorship the establishment of its sphere of influence over the Baltic states. Danzing was incorporated into Germany as

a result of a coup and on September 1, 1939, German forces entered Poland with a view to its assimilation into the German empire. Mussolini was at the same time expanding to the south-east of Italy, with the consent and active support of Germany. In the east also Japan, which had joined the Italo-German Axis, as the third partner, had launched on its aggression into China nibbling its coastline, and had established secret agents in the British possessions of Burma and Malaya and the Dutch territories of Indonesia. The French empire in Indo-China was no less threatened, so also Siam and Philippines were faced with the ultimate danger of extinction. These ominous developments in Europe and Asia posed threat to European democracies of England and France with their extensive empires in Asia and Africa. Great Britain had fear of France and therefore neither of these two powers took early measures to add to their defence establishments commensurate with the threat to which they were exposed. Neville Chamberlain's policy of appeasement failed to inhibit Hitler from aggressive action. Consequently an alliance for mutual defence was contracted between France and Great Britain and this united power offered protection to Poland in case of attack by Germany. This did not prevent Hitler from mounting his blitzkrieg against that state which compelled the western allies to declare war upon Germany on 3 September 1939. The League of Nations had proved a broken reed to stop aggression and afford protection to weak states. Imperialism had not abated a whit and disarmament had made no progress. Its failure paved the way for the World War which came in 1939 and convulsed the entire world for six years.

The Indian national leaders were conscious of the impending war and had expressed their sympathy to the victims of aggression. There was definite opposition to the principle of Fascism, wedded as they were to democracy, freedom and anti-imperialism. Jawaharlal had expressed support to Spanish republican party and did not hesitate to denounce Japan for its aggression on China. The Congress, under his inspiration, had condemned the war of despotism against freedom in Spain and expressed indignation against Italy for invading Abyssinia. There was resentment against British measures extending indirect support to the Central European dictators. In 1937, Japan was censured

for its invasion of China, and the Congress warned the Government of India unequivocally against employing Indian troops and resources for imperialist purposes, when some Indian forces were despatched to Hongkong, Singapore and Egypt without the consent of the Indian legislature. The nearness of war was pointed out by Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose in 1938, the latter even going to the extent of pointing out that "the clay feet of a gigantic empire now stand exposed", as the British empire might soon be involved into trouble with the Axis powers and in Egypt and Iraq. In March 1939 the Tripuri Congress adopted a resolution warning the Government that it would resist imposition of war on India. Apart from Gandhiji's strong antipathy to violence in any form and the creed of non-violence, other sections in the Congress were definitely hostile to any assistance being rendered to the imperialist government which had resisted Indian demand for independence and responsible government. On 11 August 1939, the Congress Working Committee adopted a comprehensive resolution clearly expounding its views on the coming war and the line of action it would adopt. It declared its undiluted opposition to any imperialist war, and unequivocal determination to resist all attempts to impose war on India. It condemned the sending of troops to Singapore and Hongkong, the extension of the term of the Indian Legislative Assembly, and called upon its members to desist from attending its next session. Finally the Committee reminded "provincial governments to assist in no way the war preparations of the British Government and to keep in mind the policy laid down by the Congress to which they must adhere. If the carrying out of this policy leads to resignations or the removal of the Congress ministers, they must prepare for the contingency". Thus before the war actually began, the Congress had made no secret of its attitude of not cooperating with war effort and opposing India being involved in war without the consent of its people. The Muslim League insisted on the fulfilment of their demands without delay to evoke its support to war. However, Panjab and Bengal Prime Ministers, despite their admission into the League pledged unhesitatingly the manpower and resources of their provinces to Great Britain and her allies.

On his side in the event of war, the Viceroy was keen that

“the Government of India should be vested with special authority for the purpose of coordinating the activities of central and provincial governments”. This measure was suggested to forestall the expected opposition of the Congress to war effort and to enable the full exploitation of India's vast resources. By the Act of 1935, the Government of India possessed power in an emergency “to make laws for a province or any part thereof with respect to any of the matters” in the provincial list, but this clause did not take away executive authority in respect of such matters from the provincial government. And the need at the moment was to endow the irresponsible government at the centre to exercise unlimited legislative and executive power to push forth war effort. Hence the Parliament enacted the amendment act of 1939 empowering the central government “not only to give directions to a province as to the manner in which its executive authority should be exercised, but to make laws conferring executive authority in respect of provincial subjects on the central government and its officers.” Thus the ground had been prepared for comprehensive interference in the working of provincial ministries to serve imperial interests, notwithstanding the assurance of non-interference in their normal functioning. With this amendment the position of the Congress ministries would become extremely awkward if they were to carry into effect the policies and dictates of the Congress Working Committee. To cap it all Linlithgow, without consulting the Indian Legislative Assembly or the national leaders, declared India's belligerency as being at war with Germany. This was an affront to the national sentiment and unambiguous flouting of the declared views of the Congress. The Viceroy appealed for the sympathy and support of the Indian people to Great Britain in its war with German dictatorship. At the same time he invited Gandhiji, Jinnah and the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes to meet him in Simla. The last of them offered unequivocal support of the princes in men and material. Gandhiji had no authority from the Congress to negotiate with the Viceroy and, as he stated the day after his meeting, he had not gone there as its envoy to come to any understanding with the Government and had therefore returned empty-handed. He expressed his personal feelings of sympathy for England and France and shed tears on the possible destruction of the Houses



of Parliament and Westminster Abbey. As a votary of non-violence he shuddered at the destruction of humanity. He stressed that "I am not just now thinking of India's deliverance. It will come, but what will it be worth if England and France fell, or if they come out victorious over Germany ruined and humbled." Jinnah was non-committal as ever and took shelter behind his Working Committee which alone would decide the matter. The Viceroy, however, did not let grass grow under his feet. The Defence of India Bill was passed, Congress members having abstained from the session, and Linlithgow announced the indefinite postponement of federation, though he professed adherence to that objective. This was done to appease the princes and the Muslim League while it was felt that it would not cause serious umbrage to the left wing of the Congress.

These developments led the Congress Working Committee to determine its attitude to the war and future action to be taken by the Congress. It met at Wardha for a week and passed the following resolution on 14 September 1939 which for the time outlined its policy. It referred to its earlier resolution which reiterated the "principles which should guide the nation in the event of war" as well as "displeasure at the flouting of Indian opinion by the British Government." Declaration of India as a belligerent country, amendment of the Act, promulgation of Ordinances and other "far reaching measures" taken by the Government of India during the interim period were criticised as they would "affect the Indian people vitally and circumscribe and limit the powers and activities of the Provincial Governments." Next, it reiterated its "disapproval of the ideology and practice of Fascism and Nazism" and "unhesitatingly condemn" German aggression against Poland. The Committee then declared that the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people. Congress attitude towards war was announced and the principle was laid down that, "If the war is to defend the status quo of imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privileges, then India can have nothing to do with it. If, however, the issue is democracy and a world order based on democracy, then India is vitally interested in it" for "interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British democracy or of world democracy".

Hence if the British entered war for the "maintenance and extension of democracy", they must end imperialism and "establish full democracy in India", and the Indian people must have the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly." In that event the "free democratic India will gladly associate with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic cooperation." Only a free India could play its proper role in world-reorganisation on the basis of cessation of exploitation and domination of the weaker nations. Only with the end of imperialism and fascism could a new world order be created and in that task India's association and cooperation would be available, but not in a war directed towards the consolidation of imperial hold. But owing to the rapidly changing situation, the Committee desisted from taking any final decision and invited the "British Government to declare in unequivocal terms their war aims in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present." For, they affirmed, "The real test of any declaration is its application in the present, for it is the present that will govern action today and also give shape to the future." Finally the Committee appealed for unity among the Indian people and end of all conflict and controversy. This resolution threw the ball into the British court and deferred taking any final decision. A sub-committee consisting of Jawaharlal Nehru, Abul Kalam Azad and Vallabhbhai Patel was formed to deal with the questions arising out of the international situation. Gandhiji was not happy about it, as he believed in giving support unconditionally, if at all, but emphasised that India's recognition as an independent nation was essential.

The Muslim League also was naturally non-committal about participation in war but warned the British Government that Muslim support might be available on the fulfilment of two conditions, namely, first that the Muslims must be assured of justice and fair play in the Congress provinces, and second, that no constitutional advance would be made or any constitution framed "without the consent and approval of the Muslim League" The Congress ministries were called upon by Patel to act in the background of the resolution adopted by the Working Committee

and not allow their responsibility as provincial governments to be over-ridden". They were also asked to get similar resolutions passed by their legislatures. There was general approval of the step taken by the Congress for there was wide resentment at the unilateral declaration of India's belligerency, and, chastened by earlier experience, people wanted firm assurance for their future. The British Government was not at this stage prepared to part even with an iota of power and desired to utilise Indian resources to the full for their war effort. The Congress was still viewed with hostility, and secret instructions were given to the Governors and their Chief Secretaries to prepare plans to crush any symptoms of civil disobedience and ban Congress activities. There was also an inclination towards magnifying the communal tangle and rendering secret support to the Muslim League in operating as a brake on constitutional advance. But the Viceroy also recognised the importance of assuaging popular feeling without yielding any substantial concessions. Nonetheless he felt the need for holding out some minor concessions which might provide, as Menon has stated, "the Congress and the League an excuse for cooperation despite their declaration that they would do so only at a price". Any constitutional changes during the war were ruled out, but Linlithgow was prepared to constitute a Defence Liaison Committee to which under his presidentship confidential information about war might be imparted. The Secretary of State also could not envision any changes in the constitution, but he felt the need of some early announcement which might satisfy the Congress. When the war was over he felt there should be reconsideration of the plans for federation and embodying them in the Act. He also wanted the Defence Liaison Committee, a purely advisory and consultative body, to be more closely associated with the Viceroy. Linlithgow did not want to present a "completely blank negative" to the Congress and League demands, and would make a public announcement only after discussion with the leaders. Consequently he met Gandhiji on 26 September and Rajendra Prasad and Nehru on 2 October. Gandhiji demanded a declaration of policy which would leave India free to frame its constitution and stressed the importance of a declaration which would be "full and satisfying" and might "stand for all time" giving hope for the fulfilment of India's

aspirations. The other two Congress leaders also demanded a "full-blooded, positive and unambiguous" declaration promising absolute freedom for India after the war, the constitution to be framed by the Indian people through a Constituent Assembly. They also wanted immediate share of power at the Centre.

The Viceroy had tried to highlight the communal differences and pointed out difficulties in making his Executive Council to function as a Cabinet, though he was prepared to associate some political leaders with his government. He met other party leaders also and naturally there was a cacophony of opinions and many of them were opposed to the Congress. On its side the Congress exercised restraint and did not take any positive decision pending Viceroy's announcement. On October 8, a policy of concession was hinted at pertaining to the expansion of Executive Council, establishment of a War Council and setting up of a body to devise the framework of a constitution immediately after the end of the war. But the offer was not acceptable to the Congress, hence a fuller statement was made on October 17, 1939. No attempt, however, was made in it to define precisely British war aims and how far would they affect India's future status. All that the Viceroy could say was to refer to Prime Minister's statement on the declaration of war which, he said, "clearly establishes the nature of the cause for which we are fighting, and justifies.....the extension of moral support and her goodwill to the prosecution of that cause" by India. Regarding the constitutional future of this country he referred to the 1935 statement of Sir Samuel Hoare that "the natural issue of India's progress was the attainment of Dominion Status". He further said that "when the time comes to resume consideration of the plan for the future Federal Government of India.....it will be necessary to reconsider in the light of these circumstances to what extent the details of the plan embodied in the Act of 1935 remain appropriate". And then categorically stated "I am authorised now by His Majesty's Government to say that at the end of the war they will be very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of the several communities, parties, and interests in India, and with the Indian Princes, with a view to assuring their aid and cooperation in the framing of such modifications as may seem desirable". He also declared the "intention and anxiety" of the British Government "to further

the partnership between India and the United Kingdom within the Empire to the end that India may attain her due place among the great Dominions". For the immediate the Viceroy announced his intention to set up a consultative group representing all the major political parties and the Princes for the purpose of associating Indian public opinion with the conduct of war and with war activities. There was also stress laid on consultation with the minorities, and the Viceroy cautioned "against claiming too rapid advance to self-government".

It is not surprising that such a declaration was deemed wholly inadequate to meet the then situation. Gandhiji condemned it as quite unsatisfactory and despaired of democracy in India as long as British could prevent it. All that the Viceroy promised, as Gandhiji stated, was another Round Table Conference at the end of the war, and like its predecessor it was bound to fail. He expressed his disappointment in the words that "The Congress asked for bread and it has got a stone". Rajendra Prasad declared that the "British policy remains as it always has been". Nehru and Azad felt that there was no common ground between the Congress and the British Government and "our paths diverge completely". The reaction of the Congress Working Committee, at its meeting on 22 October, therefore was one of condemnation of the statement as "an unequivocal reiteration of the same old imperialistic policy". Hence it decided against giving any support to the British Government and called upon the Congress ministries in the provinces to resign and relinquish office. But there was to be no hasty action like civil disobedience, political strikes or the like. Within a few days thereafter the Congress ministries in seven provinces resigned and the Governors resumed government under Section 93 of the Act, suspending provincial autonomy. Thus came to a close the brief experiment in responsible government in the limited field of the provinces and the Congress went into wilderness once again. Was there any alternative? Menon has referred to the general regret at this decision and felt that "it only weakened the bargaining power of the Congress". It was the belief of some that in office the Congress ministries might have obstructed war effort and could have thus compelled the British authorities to yield to Indian demands. The Government of India had armed itself with tremendous powers

to neutralise such obstructive actions and was fully prepared to crush the Congress if it resorted to civil disobedience. No interference was to be tolerated in utilising Indian resources for the prosecution of war. The only course then for these ministries was either to cooperate as the governments of Panjab, Bengal, Sind and Assam did, submitting to the dictates of the Central government or be forced to resign or be dismissed later. There was no middle ground between full cooperation and complete dissociation. The Working Committee therefore took the honourable course of quitting office before suffering humiliation later. Could the British accede to Congress demands, however modest they might be ? Congress demanded independence after the war with the right of self-determination by the Indian people. Any concession in this direction would have generated strong opposition in the Conservative Party in Great Britain for which the government was not prepared in war time. Also the minority problem in India, militated against any immediate concession, though it may not be wrong to presume that, being a British creation, it might have been neutralised. But the rulers were out to exploit the differences for they did not wish to renounce a mighty handle to beat the Congress. And as yet a situation had not developed which would compel the British Government to relinquish imperial interests and make India free. Then there was the immediate problem of associating political leadership with government at the Centre and establish responsible government as in the Dominions. Could the British repose trust in their unswerving cooperation in the war effort ? There was no wish to take risks, or to part with power at the time. Imperialism does not liquidate itself willingly and neither the war situation nor the developments in India were of the magnitude which would call for such self-effacement.

## *Towards Independence*

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War accelerated the process towards independence. Exhausted by the first World War and convinced of the effectiveness of rigorous terms of the Peace of Versailles in curbing the bellicosity of Germany, the British nation had made little effort to replenish its armament to meet the new challenge posed by rise of Nazism in Germany and Fascism in Italy. The League of Nations had proved its futility in maintaining world peace; its programme of disarmament failed to take effect and it exhibited its weakness in preventing aggression by Italy in Abyssinia, or by Japan in Manchuoko or Germany in absorbing Austria and Suedetanland in pursuance of the demand for Lebensraum, before launching the blitzkrieg against Poland. The British Government had started on the path of rearmament rather late, but by 1939 had plugged many of the gaps and arms and ammunition as well as aeroplanes in large number were rolling down the assembly line. Even then, however, British war preparations as well as those of their ally the French were not adequate to encounter successfully the German pusch westward or render support to their portege Poland. But the war began at a low pitch and for many months, the phoney war did not demand immense exertion. There were three main stages in the course of the Second World War. In the first lasting upto the spring of 1940, the fighting was mainly confined to the eastern periphery of Germany, Italy had not entered into the conflict and France and England were not threatened. In the second stage, lasting

upto 1943, Hitler had brought Norway and Denmark under his sway, Netherlands and Belgium had been invaded and France was forced to sue for terms. Nazi forces were directed against Russia which reeled at the first blow and German advance threatened to march across the Black Sea into Asia on its way to endanger British hold over India. Italy had embarked on an aggressive design in North Africa, threatening British positions in Egypt and eastern Africa and Western Asia was increasingly yielding to Fascist influence. In the east Japan entered the war by challenging the United States in Pearl Harbour and led a hurricane invasion of South-east Asia besides that of China, and soon succeeded in vanquishing the Western empires in Philippines, Dutch East Indies, Malaya, Indo-China and Burma. Siam also lost independence. The Japanese forces were poised on the eastern frontier of India and her navy had unimpeded sway over the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. The third stage commenced in 1943 with the tide turning against the Axis powers in Russia, Africa, West Asia and even in the east. The armies of the United States, allied with the British and Indian forces, invaded Italy and embarked on the western coast of France. The dual advance from the east and west pierced the Nazi armour, destroyed Fascist power and ultimately defeated Germany, Italy and Japan so that the war came to an end in 1945. This giant struggle for existence had left England a battered power, with inadequate resources in men and material, and dependent on the United States, to retain firm hold on her empire. The trend of political movement for independence in India was swayed by the turn of events in the three respective stages of the war and its aftermath in England.

Three main parties, with conflicting aims and ideologies, were involved in the struggle for freedom in India. These were the British Government with its subordinate agency, the Government of India under the Governor-General and Council, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. Any solution of the constitutional tangle must find accommodation of their divergent interests. The British Government was in no mood till the end of the war to relinquish its imperial hold over India. Churchill was frank enough to proclaim that he had



not become the first minister of His Majesty's Government to liquidate the empire. The Conservative party along with the Liberals and even the Labour party, in this period, clung to the concept of empire and were not prepared to forgo the benefits which accrued from the imperial grip on India. The exigencies of the war and the importance of conciliating American opinion, particularly after the entry of the United States into the fray, compelled the British authorities in New Delhi and Whitehall to contemplate the means and evolve formulas for evoking Indian response to war efforts and afford semblance of meeting the Indian demand, but there was to be no fundamental change in the system of government or the objective of exploiting India for imperial purposes. Only when the cost of maintaining their hold on India grew disproportionate to the accruing benefits did the post-war Labour Government decide on quitting India, but not without dividing it to satisfy the Muslim League demand of Pakistan. The Indian National Congress had adopted the ideal of complete independence and made it a slogan since 1930. To achieve this end, the mode of framing a constitution by the Constituent Assembly, representing the Indian people, was enunciated, for the nationalist opinion did not favour a constitution framed by British Parliament and imposed on India. Many among the leaders, particularly Jawaharlal Nehru, ignored or minimised the gravity of the communal problem and paid scant attention to Jinnah's cry for Pakistan which they felt was unrealistic and contrary to the interest of the Muslims. The Congress was also not united on the means to achieve the end. While Mahatma Gandhi had absolute faith in the efficacy of non-violence, many of his intimate adherents in their pragmatism used it merely as an expedient, and were prepared to render full support to the Allied war effort for a quid pro quo. By and large there was sympathy for the cause of democracy and the western nations of England, France and the United States, and opposition to Nazism and Fascism which were totalitarian concepts wholly inconsonant with the democratic ideal of national self-determination, the creed of the Congress. The travails of China, then being battered by Japanese armed aggression, struck a sympathetic note in nationalist hearts, which viewed

with dismay the Japanese victories in the east. Hence had grown the feeling not to embarrass the British in their hour of crisis. But the deteriorating condition of the war and increasing misery of the people, together with the rising sentiment of violence, generated by the Axis propaganda and the exploits of the Indian National Army under the leadership of Subhash Chandra Bose, compelled the Congress to adopt measures for early achievement of independence, and towards that purpose to seek leadership of Gandhiji in utilising the power of non-violence and embark on a programme of civil disobedience.

The third element was the Muslim League, having Jinnah as its president, with its programme of a separate state for the Muslims. Since 1906, the communal issue had figured prominently in any constitutional advance, and it aggravated progressively till it assumed a critical phase on the eve of the War in 1939. In the initial stages, the Muslim League had stood for separate electorates and weightage in representation. The fourteen points of Jinnah as well as the communal demand at the Round Table Conference did not envisage nationhood for the Muslims with their separate state. And when elections were held for the provincial councils under the scheme of provincial autonomy in 1937, the Muslim League had even come to some understanding with the Congress in certain provinces. Also it had failed to gain more than nearly one fifth of the total Muslim seats in the country. Its impact on the Muslims was infinitesimal, and in the Muslim majority provinces, it had failed to gain support. In Panjab, the Unionist Party, a combination of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, composed mainly of land-owning elements, under the leadership of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan had formed the government. Similarly in Bengal, Fazlul Haq, with his Krishak Praja Party, was the Premier. And in North-west Frontier Province and Sind, two predominant Muslim areas, the Muslim League had cut no ice. Jinnah's leadership, thus was not recognised by a vast proportion of the Muslim population. But the refusal of the Congress to accommodate the elected representatives of the Muslim League as a coalition in the new governments formed in the United Provinces and Bihar enabled Jinnah to raise the issue of Muslim position in a united India. In 1931, Ramsay MacDonald, British Prime

Minister, had termed the communal problem as a formidable obstacle which should be settled by mutual agreement. In case it was impossible, he threatened solution by His Majesty's Government of the problems of representation, as well as decision about "what checks and balances the Constitution is to contain to protect the minorities from unrestricted and tyrannical use of the democratic principle expressing itself solely through the majority power." And it was against the application of the majority power, as exercised by the Congress ministries, that Jinnah raised the cry of persecution of the Muslims. Congress insistence on homogenous ministries was, as Menon has hinted, "the beginning of a serious rift between the Congress and the Muslim League and was a factor which induced Muslim neutral opinion to turn to the support of Jinnah". The Congress programme of Muslim mass contact further widened the gulf. Henceforth "Jinnah followed a two-pronged policy to consolidate the position of the League. The first was to win mass support" by the propaganda that the Congress was only a Hindu organisation which he substantiated by reference to Bande Mataram song, the tricolour flag and the Vidya Mandir scheme in the Central Provinces, and the Hindi-Urdu controversy. The Pirpur Committee Report highlighted these aspects enunciating the theory of persecution of the Muslims in the Congress provinces. Jinnah also made an effort to bring all Muslim political parties under the banner of the League, and by 1938, he had "consolidated his position to a considerable extent". That emboldened him to make the claim that the Muslim League "represented the entire Muslim community" and the Congress represented merely the Hindus, which position the latter could not accept. The intransigence of Jinnah further aggravated by the support which he received from the ruling circle.

With the commencement of the war in September 1939, the attitude of the Muslim League hardened and its conditions for support in war effort were prejudicial to the nationalist claim for independence of a united India, whose constitution would be framed by a Constituent Assembly comprising representatives of all elements in the country. Very early in its resolution of 18 September, the Working Committee of the Muslim League

bewailed the plight of Muslim minority in the Congress governed provinces, condemned the scheme of all-India federation and appealed to the British Government for the "greater protection for Muslims against Congress oppression", and stipulated Muslim support on the condition that an assurance should be given "that no declaration regarding constitutional advance for India would be made, nor any constitution framed without the consent and approval of the Muslim League". This amounted to a veto on future constitutional advance by the minority, irrespective of the interests of the majority. The Congress was not satisfied with the declarations made by the Viceroy, demanded enunciation of war aims and how far would they affect India's claim for independence, and decided to withdraw Congress ministries from the provincial governments. Thereafter the Viceroy began to lean on the support of the Muslim League and "insisted on mutual settlement by the Congress and the League of their differences in the provincial field" as a condition to any advance in the sphere of central government. In response to the demands made by Jinnah on 5 November to afford to the Muslim League, in essence, the right of veto on any constitutional advance, the Viceroy in his reply of 23 December assured him that "His Majesty's Government was alive to the importance of the position of the Muslim community in India and full weight would be given to their view". Meanwhile with the end of Congress governments in eight provinces, Jinnah called for the 'Deliverance Day' being observed on 22 December. In his statement made in January 1940, he ridiculed the idea of the Constituent Assembly, for in his view it would lead to the disappearance of British control and commerce, abolition of Indian States, stifling of minority opposition and the emergence of a great Hindu nation "governed by its beloved leader, Mr. Gandhi and the Congress Working Committee". In conclusion he demanded recognition of his premise "that there are in India two nations which both must share the governance of their common motherland". Jinnah's position was made further clear in his conversation with the Viceroy on 13 March 1940, when he hinted on his falling "back on some form of partition of the country". He was even prepared to let the British continue in India having predominant responsibility for

defence as he favoured a Muslim area run by Muslims in collaboration with Great Britain which alone could make "Muslim existence happy within a particular area, in addition to the feeling that Muslims would be able to safeguard, because of their military power, even those of their community who were domiciled in the Hindu area". The Pakistan resolution was the next logical step.

Jinnah was emboldened to adopt this course by the attitude of the Secretary of State and the Viceroy in giving recognition to his exaggerated claims for the Muslim minority. Zetland, the Secretary of State, had written to Linlithgow even in December 1938 that "the Muslims are uniting in their determination not to be dominated by the Hindus in any form of Central Government which may come into being". It was the impression of Khaliquzzaman that the India Office would not oppose Pakistan. To the demand made by Jinnah that any constitutional change must obtain the approval and consent of the Muslims, the Viceroy had written to him on 23 December 1939 that "I can assure you that His Majesty's Government are not under any misapprehension as to the importance of the contentment of the Muslim community to the stability and success of any constitutional developments in India. You need therefore have no fear that the weight which your community's position in India necessarily gives their views will be understood". Zetland had also accepted the Muslim League as the sole representative of the Muslim community even though many other bodies having considerable membership stood out of it. At the same time he dubbed the Congress as a Hindu body, and equated the two of them. In his statement in the House of Lords on 14 December, the Secretary of State called the Muslims "a community of from eighty to ninety millions with race memories of days, when for 200 years the Moghol dynasty ruled over a greater part of Indian sub-continent. They have behind them a tradition of military service, which persists to this day and is exemplified by the high proportion of the Indian army which they fill". A false impression of their importance was created by exaggerating this proportion. With the stiffness in the attitude of the Congress which demanded a clear acceptance of the independence of India after the war

and the concealed threat of civil disobedience, the British authorities made adroit use of the weapon of divide and rule and sought to cajole the Muslim League and its leader Jinnah to blunt the edge of Congress opposition. The speech of the Secretary of State on 18 April was intended for the satisfaction of Jinnah. He asserted that the future constitution would not be dictated by the Parliament against the wishes of the people, and the undertaking that all parties and interests would be consulted "connotes not dictation but negotiation. Admittedly a substantial measure of agreement amongst the communities in India is essential if the vision of a united India is to become a reality, for I cannot believe that any Government or Parliament in this country would attempt to impose by force upon, for example, 80 million Muslim subjects of His Majesty in India a form of constitution under which they would not live peacefully and contentedly". Dr. Tara Chand has correctly summed up the position. He writes, "from the spoken and written word of the Government spokesmen the Muslim League naturally drew the conclusion that they had been given the right of veto on all constitutional proposals. It was but human that the frustrated, vain and infuriated Jinnah should make the most of it".

The nationalist Jinnah, who swore by the unity of India and was a champion of Hindu Muslim unity and solidarity was led by force of circumstances and his egotism to demand the partition, called vivisection of India by Gandhiji. A juvenile thesis outlined by an Oxford student Rahmat Ali, perhaps not without the inspiration from British conservative elements, which Jinnah had refused to countenance earlier was adopted by him in 1940 to spite the Congress and play the game of imperialism. In his presidential address at the Muslim League session in Lahore in March 1940, at which the Pakistan resolution was adopted, Jinnah repeated Morley's argument that the difference between Hindus and Muslims was not one of religious faith. "It is a difference in life, in tradition, in history, in all the social things as well as articles of belief that constitute a community". On the same lines, Jinnah proclaimed that Islam and Hinduism "are not religions in the strict sense of the word, but are, in fact, different and distinct social orders...and can

never evolve a common nationality...The Hindu and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, literature... they belong to two different civilisations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions". They derive "inspiration from different sources of history". Hence "to yoke together two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built up for the government of such a state". Therefore the "Muslim India cannot accept any constitution which must necessarily result in a Hindu-majority Government", as that would mean Hindu raj. He emphasised that "Musalmans are not a minority. Musalmans are a nation according to any definition of a nation, and they must have their homelands, their territory and their state". Finally he adumbrated the thesis that "The problem of India is not of an intercommunal character but manifestly of an international one and it must be treated as such... the only course open to us all is to allow the major nations separate homelands by dividing India into autonomous national states". He did not believe that these states would be antagonistic to each other, which conviction history has belied, but would lead towards national goodwill by international pacts between them. In this background the Muslim League adopted the Pakistan resolution on 24 March 1940, which came to be the basis of its political demands and queered the pitch for an independent united India. The resolution ran as follows: "Resolved that it is the considered view of this session of the All-India Muslim League that no constitutional scheme would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principle, viz, that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in majority, as in the north-western and eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute independent States in which the constituent unit shall be autonomous and sovereign". Adequate and mandatory safeguards must be provided for minorities "in these regions for the protection of their religious, cultural,

political, administrative and other rights and interests in consultation with them". So also in other parts of India where the Muslims would be in a minority adequate safeguards should be provided. On this basis and in accordance with these basic principles, a scheme of constitution was to be framed "providing for the assumption finally by the respective regions of all powers such as defence, external affairs, communications customs and such other matters as may be necessary". The resolution was vague and left much for interpretation by its author who also seems to have had no clear idea of what Pakistan stood for in the initial stages. It met with ridicule, opposition and sneering indifference by the nationalist leaders, and press, but the more it was decried the more stubborn became the position of its adherents. Its viability was doubted by many but Jinnah swore by it, and it became the creed of Muslim India, and was utilised by the British to frustrate the Congress demand for independence and a constitution framed by Indians through their constituent assembly.

The Congress reaction to the war was one of sympathy for the cause of democracy, but it was unable to render effective support to the war effort if the fight was to defend "imperialist possessions, vested interests and privilege". If the issue was that of democracy, and a world order based on democracy, then the Congress proclaimed its interest in the cause. Hence it stressed the point that "if Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy then she must necessarily end imperialism in her own possessions, establish full democracy in India, and the Indian people must have the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution through a constituent assembly without any external interference and must guide their own policy." The Working Committee of the Congress, therefore, asked for an unequivocal declaration by the British Government of "their war aims...in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect in the present." Gandhiji explicitly stated that the Congress did not insist on any constitutional change during the war, but demanded only a declaration that Britain's war aims necessarily include independence



of India according to the charter framed by her elected representatives after the war". As a first step in protest against the declaration of India's belligerency without the consent of the people, Congress ministries were withdrawn. Gandhiji stated that the door had been left open for the British Government to "mend the mistake." The statements made by the Viceroy and the Secretary of State during this period of the phoney war evaded the main issue, and magnified the communal problem. There was no inclination to depart even notionally from the autocratic character of government or to relinquish imperial interests. The utmost which the British Government could then envisage was the expansion of the Executive Council so as to include a few representative Indians and form a war advisory council, without any substantial authority. There was thus no consonance between the Congress demand and the concessions contemplated by the government. Gandhiji's statements had the effect of exposing the hollowness of British professions. He asked "Does Britain intend to recognise India as an independent nation or must India remain Britain's dependency?" In his view the question was important "to enable people of India to decide how they should behave during the world crisis", and to that extent "the issue becomes purely moral." British obduracy to meet the Congress demand aggravated discontent and roused intense resentment, and a campaign of civil disobedience was contemplated by many. But Gandhiji did not countenance that step, and desired the Congressmen to develop sense of discipline, eliminate disunity and pursue the constructive programme of spinning, Hindu-Muslim unity and removal of untouchability. Meanwhile the Government continued its programme of recruitment for the army and exploiting India's material resources. The problem of the minorities was highlighted. The Ramgarh session of the Congress in 1940, "reiterated the inability of the Congress to participate in a war undertaken for imperialist ends," and "reaffirmed that nothing short of complete independence can be accepted by the people of India. The Indian freedom cannot exist within the orbit of imperialism and dominion status or any other status within the imperial structure is wholly inapplicable to India." Its resolution further stated that "the withdrawal of Congress

ministries must naturally be followed by civil disobedience to which the Congress will unhesitatingly resort as soon as the Congress organization is considered fit enough for the purpose or in case circumstances so shape themselves as to precipitate a crisis." But Gandhiji did not envisage mass civil disobedience at the moment, because of lawlessness which prevailed in the country. The choice was only for individual civil disobedience either on a large scale or restricted only to himself. He did not, at that stage, want to obstruct government programme of harnessing Indian resources in men and material, but mainly to deny moral influence to Britain. He said "the moral influence of the Congress cannot avail Britain, unless she washes her hands clean of India".

In July 1940, the Congress Working Committee again demanded "acknowledgment by Britain of the complete independence of India and a declaration that as an immediate step in giving effect to it, a provisional National Government would be constituted at the Centre". Its resolution affirmed that unless a "declaration is made, and a National Government accordingly formed at the Centre without delay, all efforts at organising the material and moral resources of the country for defence cannot in any sense be voluntary or as from a free country and will therefore, be ineffective". If, however, a declaration were made, "it will enable the Congress to throw its full weight in the efforts for the effective organisation of the defence of the country". This decision was adopted with full consciousness of the stand of Gandhiji about non-violence and his severance from the Congress. As such it reveals the sincerity of the Working Committee in aiding Allied war effort in return for the recognition of independence of India after the war. But the British Government was not prepared to relinquish its hold on India; hence, as Pethic Lawrence has remarked, "there was no likelihood of accommodation between them". The attitude of His Majesty's Government was clearly enunciated by the Viceroy in his interview with Gandhiji on 5 February. As mentioned by Menon, Dominion Status at the earliest possible date remained the fixed intention of the British Government, as well as their offer to expand the Governor-General's Executive Council, with four seats placed at the disposal of the political parties, two for

the Congress one for the Muslim League and one to be filled from outside these two bodies, as "a token of the determination of His Majesty's Government to proceed towards responsible government at the Centre". The Viceroy was also prepared to resume negotiations for the formation of a federal legislature. It is evident from the attitude of the Viceroy that with the resignation of the Congress ministries and imposition of Section 93 taking over the provincial administration by the Central Government he did not feel any immediate necessity for conciliating the Congress, as there was no restraint on securing necessary resources in men and material for the war effort. He was also certain that any attempt by the Congress to launch civil disobedience could be met with by stern opposition for which the government had ample means. With the minority problem growing acute with Jinnah's intransigence to neutralise the Congress programme, and half-heartedness of some elements in the Congress, the Viceroy felt secure in his position and was therefore averse to advice any advance beyond the expansion of the Executive Council, without departing from the spirit in which the government was carried on. In April 1940, with the war reaching the shores of the English Channel, Chamberlain had to resign and Winston Churchill became the Prime Minister. This change in His Majesty's Government made for greater conservatism in their approach to the Indian problem. The war situation called for wider utilisation of Indian resources, and such any move towards national government or relaxation in bureaucratic control was out of the question. The August statement of the Viceroy was conceived in that spirit.

Linlithgow sought for guidance from the new government in London as regards the policy to be adopted in dealing with political problem in India. He did not anticipate any trouble at the moment or embarrassment from the side of the Congress or the Muslim League. He felt that he could carry on the war effort without making any change in the existing structure of government. He was also prepared "to give the fullest weight to the Muslim position at a time when the Muslims alone were working the constitution in the provinces and when their assistance and support were so essential to His Majesty's Government, both from the military point of view (they were providing

60 per cent of the army) and because of possible reactions in other countries". Linlithgow had misrepresented the Muslim proportion in the armed forces which was (35 per cent) very much less than the figure mentioned by him. The Viceroy's idea of doing nothing did not meet with the view of Amery, the Secretary of State, who wanted him to meet political leaders for finding a way to work the provincial constitution and seek their participation in the Executive Council of the Government of India. This led to meetings between Linlithgow and Gandhiji, Jinnah, Savarkar and the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, but these only revealed the serious gap in the thinking of the various parties. Meanwhile the Congress Working Committee on 17 June had differed from Gandhiji on the scope of non-violence as he did not want "that India should maintain armed forces to defend her freedom against external aggression or internal disorder." The Committee favoured "parallel organisation of self-defence and the maintenance of public security throughout the country by Congressmen on their own and in full cooperation with the sympathetic groups". The Committee, however, held to the principle that struggle for independence must continue on non-violent lines and asked the people not to support war committees or "contribute to war funds or enlist in civil guards under official control". This break with Mahatma Gandhi on the vital issue of non-violence clearly indicated the inclination of the majority in the Congress Working Committee to offer full participation in the Allied war effort on certain conditions, which were outlined in a resolution adopted in July. It demanded "immediate and unequivocal declaration of full independence for India, but in the interim period as an immediate step to give effect to it", the Committee asked that "a provisional national government should be constituted at the Centre which, although formed as a transitory measure should be such as to command the confidence of all the elected elements in the central legislature and secure the closest cooperation of responsible governments in the provinces". In the absence of such a move, "all the efforts at organising the material and moral resources of the country for its defence cannot in any sense be voluntary or as from a free country, and will, therefore, be ineffective."

In case, however, of British Government adopted these measures, the Congress would be enabled "to throw its full weight into the efforts for the effective organisation of the defence of the country". This resolution was later ratified by the All India Congress Committee. Muslim League wanted partly with the Congress and also a veto about its joining the Executive Council, and was not prepared to participate in its expansion. The Viceroy was however not prepared to toe Jinnah's line, but there was no doubt that if the Congress were reconciled the prospect of India's cooperation in war was fairly bright. The British Government and the Viceroy particularly, were not prepared to meet the Congress demand. Yet they felt there would be some advantage "in issuing a declaration setting out the aims and intentions of His Majesty's Government". Thus came the announcement of 8 August 1940, which is commonly known as August offer. Lord Pethick Lawrence has speculated whether if the British Government had "grasped the hand of Congress" and entered into negotiations on the Congress offer, "some real cooperation in the actual prosecution of the war might have emerged from the discussion." But he was conscious of the wide divergence between the aims of the two, for there was no middle path between the demand for independence and clinging to imperialism as long as possible. The new proposals were thus ineffective in bridging this wide gulf.

The August offer had as its object the achievement of "unity of national purpose in India" and to "enable her to make the fullest possible contribution in the world struggle against tyranny and aggression". The main proposals related to the expansion of the Governor-General's Executive Council so as to include some representatives of political parties, establishment of a War Advisory Council to meet at regular intervals comprising "party leaders, representatives of Indian States and other interests in the national life of India as a whole"; as well as to set up a consultative committee to facilitate agreement among the Indians "on the form which the post-war representative body should take and the method by which it should arrive at its conclusions, and secondly, upon the principles and outlines of the Constitution itself". This part of the offer

related to the immediate stage, but in addition there was a clear enunciation of the measures to be adopted when the war was over. Referring to the demand for Constituent Assembly, to frame the constitution in line with "Indian conceptions of the social, economic and political structure of Indian life", it was stated that "His Majesty's Government are in sympathy with that desire, and wish to see it given the fullest practical expression subject to the due fulfilment of the obligations which Great Britain's long connection with India has imposed upon her and for which His Majesty's Government cannot divest themselves of responsibility". But during the war "fundamental constitutional issues" could not be "decisively resolved". However, assurance was given to set up, "after the conclusion of the war with the least possible delay of a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life in order to devise the framework of the new constitution and they will lend every aid in their power to hasten decisions on all relevant matters to the utmost degree". At the same time occasion was utilised to humour the Muslim League by declaring that "His Majesty's Government could not contemplate the transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life. Nor could they be parties to the coercion of such elements into submission to such a Government". In conclusion, appeal was made for cooperation in "making a notable contribution to the victory of the world cause which was at stake", and hope was expressed that "new bounds of union and understanding would emerge to pave the way towards the attainment by India of that free and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth which remains the proclaimed and accepted goal of the Imperial Crown and of the British Parliament". Thus was proclaimed the intention of the British Government to confer on India the status of a Dominion after the war, and to that extent the after-war proposal was not inconsonant with the national ideal, though the Congress objective of independence was not accepted as such. However, the proposals for immediate implementation were not such as to inspire confidence and permit the Congress to throw itself

unequivocally into the British war effort. The statement relating to the majority interests fell far short of the Muslim League demand and was a snub to the ideal of a united India which was fondly cherished by the Hindus and the Congress. As such there was little prospect of the August offer resolving the constitutional tangle, rather it helped to harden the Congress attitude.

The August offer was summarily rejected by Azad, the Congress President, on the ground that it did not meet the demand for a national government. Menon has, on the basis of inside information, held the view that the Viceroy had in mind an opportunity of discussion with party leaders, and therefore "if the Congress leaders had only discussed the details of the reconstitution of the Executive Council, it is possible that the Viceroy would have gone more than half-way to meet the Congress". His estimate is that "Had the Congress joined the Viceroy's Executive Council at the time, and with Congress ministries coming back into power in the provinces, the political situation would have changed immensely to the advantage of the Congress". But it must also, at the same time, he admitted that the offer fell for short of the expectation of the Congress, which "demanded immediate democratic responsible government" and the "British refused to make any change in the autocratic system of administration". With the increasing hostility of the Muslim League and the intransigence of Jinnah to any proposal for united action on the basis of the unity of India, and the attitude of the British bureaucracy to exploit the Indian resources without let or hindrance, and the response from many regions and classes of Indian population to recruitment to armed forces, it is inconceivable that any radical change might have occurred in British policy of 'divide and rule' and pave the way for responsible government at the Centre, leading ultimately to independence of India, immediately after the termination of the war. However, the Congress was not enthused by the proposal to admit a few more Indians into the Executive Council without any transfer of "responsibility of the British Parliament to the Indian legislature". The reaction of the Congress Working Committee, hence, was to request Gandhiji to resume the leadership of the Congress from

which he had been absolved only a short time previously. In the next few months the Congress Working Committee indulged, more than once, in the childish frivolity of seeking his leadership and making him free to pursue his ideal of non-violence. Quite a substantial membership of that body was eager to commit India into war, if the prospect of sharing power at the highest stratum was there. Gandhiji met the Viceroy on 27 September and put forth his plan of freedom "to preach against participation in the war effort". He had ruled out mass civil disobedience as there was no wish to embarrass the government, but individual civil disobedience was chosen by him as an alternative, which "was a purely moral gesture and needed a moral objective". Hence freedom of speech, which is basic to democracy and freedom was stressed. In the words of Dr. Tara Chand, Gandhiji placed the alternative before the Viceroy "either recognise the right of free speech with all its implications or deny the right and face the consequences". He claimed the right to openly declare "the objection of the nationalist to India's part in the war". Linlithgow was not prepared to "acquiesce in the interference with the effort which would be involved in the freedom of speech so wide as that for which you have asked". The Working Committee, thereupon, decided on the individual civil disobedience which began with Vinoba Bhave, followed by Jawaharlal Nehru. More than 20,000 Congress men went to jail. On the other side, the Muslim League had also rejected the offer because of the inability of the Viceroy to give a premium to the Muslim League, involving even a veto to Congress entry in the Executive Council at a later date. In view of the inability of the two major political parties, the August proposals were for the time being shelved.

The stalemate continued and hardening of attitude was in evidence both in the Congress and the Muslim League. A non party conference meeting was held in Bombay to break the deadlock, and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had two long interviews with the Viceroy in which he discussed the implications of the resolution adopted by the Bombay Conference relating to the reconstruction of the Executive Council so to comprise non-official Indians drawn from important elements in public life



and transferring to them all portfolios including defence and finance. He asked for a "time-limit for the implementation of the new constitution after the war and the grant of Dominion Status". The British response was one of supreme indifference as Amery felt that the scheme would involve not a modification but supersession of the existing form of government, which went "beyond what we think practicable in the midst of the ever-increasing strain and urgency of the war situation". He blamed lack of agreement between the two major communities for inability to proceed with any reconstruction of the Executive Council. This taunt evoked a strong rejoinder from Gandhiji, every line and every word of which breathed indignation, holding the British rulers responsible for "the division in India's ranks", as they followed the motto of 'Divide and Rule.' He called upon them to "withdraw from India and I promise that the Congress and Muslim League and all other parties will find it to their interest to come together and devise a home-made solution for the Government of India." The war situation, however, could not remain static. The battle for Britain was in full swing, causing immense losses in shipping and bombing of the cities and industry of the country. Also Hitler hurled his armies against Russia, sweeping across its plains. Leningrad, Moscow and Stalingrad were invested and the Nazi forces were poised on the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea, ready to pounce on Central Asia and Iran on the way to India. Early crumbling of Russian resistance was feared by a stunned Europe, but the Communist ranks met the onslaught with determination and soon rolled back the German forces. Meanwhile the U-Boat campaign in the Atlantic gave offence to the United States, whose President Roosevelt evinced sympathy for the Allied cause and was rendering massive aid to England and thereby stiffening its resistance.

On August 12, 1941 Roosevelt and Churchill met on board the cruiser Augusta and outlined the common peace aims in a document commonly called the Atlantic Charter. One of its clauses affirmed that "they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them." This

Charter was greeted with enthusiasm by the subject peoples, and hopes were entertained in India. But these were soon cruelly shattered by Churchill's statement in the Parliament on 9 September. He declared that the Charter referred only to those people who had been deprived of freedom by Nazi and Fascist aggression and India could not benefit from it. He told the House of Commons that what was intended by the Charter was "primarily, the restoration of the sovereignty, self-government and national life of the states and nations of Europe now under Nazi yoke, and the principles governing any alterations in the territorial boundaries which may have to be made. So that is quite a separate problem from the progressive evolution of self-governing institutions in the regions and peoples which owe allegiance to the British Crown". As regards India, Churchill further stated that "The joint declaration does not qualify in any way the various statements of policy which have been made from time to time about the development of constitutional government in India, Burma and other parts of the British Empire. We are pledged by the Declaration of August 1940 to help India to obtain free and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth of races, subject, of course, to the fulfilment of the obligations arising from our long connection with India and our responsibilities to its many creeds, races and interests". Thus the August proposals alone were there to be looked forward to, hence there was wide resentment in India, and the feeling grew that British "promises of self-government were only intended to deceive India and the world, but were not meant to be implemented". Naturally this disappointment led to refusal of cooperation in the war effort and the continuance of individual civil disobedience for freedom of speech. The Muslim League's attitude was to "make a bargain to its advantage", as its leader believed that with Congress committed to civil disobedience, however limited the Government would "lean more and more on the support of his community". He demanded parity between Hindus and Muslims, in the Executive Council and was prepared for a barter. The League vehemently opposed the slogan of 'India first' to which mention was made by Amery in his speech on 12 November 1940, and in contrast the slogan of 'Islam first'

was raised. However, the Secretary of State in April 1941, extended the assurance that the constitution "must be the outcome of agreement between the principal elements in India's national life. That is an essential pre-requisite to the success of the future constitution". In the same breath he pointed to the "terrible dangers inherent in any break-up of the essential unity of India" which was the object of the Pakistan demand. Jinnah was not happy with such declarations and declined to cooperate in the expanded Executive Council which was enlarged in July 1941 with 12 members of whom 8 were Indians. Inclusion of Muslims in the Council without Jinnah's permission was censured by him which he presumed was "designed to create a rift in the Muslim ranks". The new Executive Council and the National Defence Council were constituted without any participation by the Congress or the League. According to the Viceroy the reorganisation had as its basis merely administrative convenience. He claimed that this step of associating "non-official gentlemen of the highest standing" and transferring to them "great departments of state, with joint responsibility for all the business" was a step of great significance.

Meanwhile the stream of individual civil disobedience had begun drying up and an influential section among Congressmen favoured retaking over power in the provinces as also a change in the satyagraha programme. On 3 December 1941, the Government of India released civil-disobedience prisoners including Nehru and Azad, perhaps hoping for alteration in Congress attitude. Gandhiji desired a meeting of the Working Committee and the All-India Congress Committee to be convened, which were held at Bardoli on 23 December. In this interval a major change had occurred in the war situation. Japan had been in negotiation with the United States, but there was no ostensible headway made, and suddenly struck at Pearl Harbour, inflicting major injury on the United States Pacific Fleet and crippling its power of attack for the time being. This act brought the United States openly in to the war, though for some time its support to the United Kingdom had been in evidence. Within forty-eight hours of the attack on the United States, Shanghai and Siam were occupied, two big

British battleships, H. M. S. Repulse and Prince of Wales, were sunk, debilitating British war potential in South-east Asia, and a landing was made on British Malaya. Japanese advance was rapid so that within four months, Singapore, Malaya and Burma had been conquered and British-Indian forces rolled back or made war prisoners. Danger to India now loomed large on the eastern frontier and along the seaboard. This Axis advance in the east coincided with the progress of war and Nazi successes in Russia and north-Africa and West Asia, posing a threat of pincer attack on the Indian soil. The Bardoli meeting of the Congress Working Committee from 23 to 30 December 1941 was held in the background of Japanese successes in the east and the peremptory danger to India's security. The resolution which emerged from the week long deliberations affirmed that 16 September 1940 Bombay resolution held good defining Congress policy. It stated "while there has been no change in the British policy towards India, the Working Committee must nevertheless take into full consideration the new world situation that has arisen by the development of war into a world conflict and its approach to India. The sympathies of the Congress must inevitable lie with the peoples who are the subject of aggression and who are fighting for their freedom, but only a free and independent India can be in a position to undertake the defence of the country on a national basis and be of help in the furtherance of the larger causes that are emerging from the storm of war. The whole back ground in India is one of hostility and of distrust of the British Government and not even the most far reaching promises can alter this background, nor can a subject India offer voluntary or willing help to an arrogant imperialism which is indistinguishable from Fascist authoritarianism. The Committee is, therefore, of opinion that the resolution of the A.I.C.C. passed in Bombay on September 16, 1940, holds today and defined the Congress policy still". The earlier resolution had "postulated that in no circumstances was violence to be met by violence". The Bardoli resolution "envisaged situations" which might involve the Congress in the armed defence of the country. This change in the spirit of the Working Committee pointing to help in "war effort as a price

for the guaranteed independence of India", led Gandhiji to ask for his being relieved of the responsibility imposed on him to conduct civil disobedience by the earlier Bombay resolution. The Working Committee once again severed its connection with Gandhiji.

The early months of 1942 witnessed escalation of war both in the east and the west and created a situation of immense panic in India. The Japanese bombardment of points on the eastern coast, threat to Calcutta and the massive emigration of Indian population from Burma, trekking the long and hazardous forest road into India, with the story of discrimination between the White and Coloured populations in the matter of evacuation, enhanced panic and created intense resentment against the British as also the apprehension that they could not afford protection to India against Axis aggression. The entry of the United States into the war, as a major partner, the growing peril to the integrity of China, the mounting danger to Anglo-Russian positions in the African-Asian complex, immediate menace to the war base in India, prompted reappraisal of Indian political situation, in Indian, British liberal, and Chinese and American circles. At a time when, as Churchill said, "the shadow of a heavy and far reaching military defeat lay over India", Marshal Chiang Kai-Shek visited India to confer with its Government "on matters of common supplies reaching China through India when the sea-route had been barred by Japanese supremacy in the South-East. He met Nehru, Gandhiji and Jinnah and made an appeal to the Indian people for help in war and held out the hope that the British would give "real political power" speedily to them. He expressed the trust "at this critical moment in the history of civilization our two peoples should exert themselves to the utmost to the cause of freedom for all mankind, for only in a free world could the Chinese and the Indian people obtain their freedom". The Marshal also appealed to Great Britain to give speedily real political power to the Indians "so that they may be in a position further to develop their spiritual and material strength and thus realize that their participation in the war is not merely an aid to the anti-aggression nations for securing victory but also a turning point in the struggle for India's freedom". To

Churchill, in his messages, he revealed the shocking "military and political situation" in India and felt that unless Indian political problem was immediately solved the danger of Japanese occupation of India would be real. He informed Roosevelt also about the gravity of danger and opined that unless British policy changed fundamentally toward India, "it would be like presenting India to the enemy and inviting them to quickly occupy India". This appreciation by the Chinese leader was shared in the government circles in Washington and demand was made for granting to India the "status of autonomy". American pressure was mounting on Churchill to take initiative in India, because as General Eisenhower observed Indian bastion must be held at all cost, otherwise junction between the Japanese and German forces would be accomplished through the Persian Gulf. Apart from the pressure by the allies of Great Britain, liberal leaders in India and the Labour partners in the National Government in London also pressed for early action to end the political impasse and woo the major political parties to cooperate with British war effort.

This led to an exercise in drafting a declaration which might meet the situation without seriously affecting British conduct of war effort. Menon in his book *The transfer of Power* has referred to the drafts prepared by Churchill, the India Committee of the Cabinet and the Viceroy. The Viceroy did not initially favour any radical departure from the substance of August 1940 declaration and was reluctant to seriously modify the character of his Executive Council. The draft prepared by the India Committee was calculated to satisfy the conflicting view-points of the Congress and the Muslim League regarding post-war constitutional changes. It provided for secession of the Indian Dominion if it so wished, setting up of a suitable constitution-making body immediately after the war, option to any province not wishing to accede to the Constitution to stand out, and a treaty between the Constitution-making body and the British Government regarding their obligations and military assistance. It was revised in the light of Viceroy's comments, but before the final draft was ready the War Cabinet decided not to make any public declaration but to depute Sir Stafford Cripps, Lord Privy Seal, to India to discuss with leading political

elements the scheme adumbrated by his Majesty's Government and see if it met with acceptance from them. This course was adopted apparently owing to the determined opposition of the Viceroy to the plan proposed by the India Committee, particularly in relation to the minority problem, and any change in the character of government during the War. On 11 March 1942, the Prime Minister, announcing the decision to send Cripps to India, said, "The crisis in the affairs of India arising out of the Japanese advance has made us wish to rally all the forces of Indian life to guard their land from the menace of the invader". To achieve that end the Cabinet had outlined proposals for "present and future action, which if accepted by India as a whole, would avoid the alternative dangers, either that the resistance of a powerful minority might impose an indefinite veto upon the wishes of the majority, or that the majority decision might be taken which would be resisted to a point destructive of internal harmony and fatal to the setting up of a new constitution (Menon). The object of Cripps's Mission was defined by Churchill as that of striving in the name of His Majesty's Government "to procure the necessary measure of assent not only from the Hindu majority but also from those great minorities amongst which the Muslims are the most important". Ostensibly Cripps was not to operate "as a plenipotentiary to negotiate the terms of an agreement", but "to explain and clarify the terms of a statement of policy that could not be altered". According to Amery, he was to "work to a definite set of instructions" and not be a "purely rowing commission". The plan though not "cut and dried" was "fairly near that". He was called upon by the Cabinet "to negotiate with the leaders of the principal sections of Indian opinion on the basis of paragraph I (e) of the "Statement of Policy" for the purpose of obtaining their immediate support for some scheme by which they can partake in an advisory or consultative manner in the counsels of their country. You may offer them, if you consider it wise or necessary, positions in the Executive Council, provided this does not embarrass the defence and good government of the country during the present critical time. In relation to this matter you will, no doubt, consult with the Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief, and will

bear in mind the supreme importance of the military situation".

Sir Stafford Cripps arrived in Delhi on 22 March and for a week he was in consultation with the Viceroy and his Council, as well as political leaders such as Gandhiji, Jinnah, Azad, Nehru, Savarkar, Ambedkar, Rajah and representatives of the Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans as well as the representatives of Indian States notably the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar, the Maharajas of Bikaner and Patiala and the Chief Minister of Hyderabad. Consultations with this medley crowd having diverse interests and holding conflicting views on the future political shape of India, were unlikely to lead to any unanimity of opinion and thereby help the cause for which Cripps came to India. Gandhiji's reaction on the Cabinet Offer was "Why did you come if this is what you have to offer? I would advise you to take the first plane home". He described the declaration as 'post-dated cheque'; and returned to Sevagram and took no interest in further discussions on the Cripps proposals. However at a Press Conference on 29 March, the emissary of the War Cabinet made public the statement with which he was charged to win concurrence of Indian political groups and enthuse the people to hurl themselves enthusiastically and energetically into the prosecution of war for the defence of India. The statement had reference both to the future of India after the war and the interim arrangements pending the final settlement. It began with the declaration of His Majesty's Government "to lay down in precise and clear terms the steps they propose shall be taken for the earliest possible realization of self-government in India". The object was defined as the creation of a new Indian Union, having the status of a "Dominion associated with the United Kingdom and other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic and external affairs". To this extent there was a veiled acceptance of the demand for independence, though within the empire. Then followed the enumeration of steps and the mechanism for the setting up of the constitution-making body. It was laid down that immediately upon the cessation of hostilities elections would be held for the lower houses of the provincial legislatures. These members



“shall as a single electoral college proceed to the election of the constitution making body by the system of proportional representation” whose strength would be one tenth of the electoral college. The Indian States would also be invited to appoint their representatives “in the same proportion to their total population as in the case of representatives of British India as a whole and with the same powers as British Indian members”. A body so composed, with the effective participation of the Indian States whose representatives would be nominees of the rulers not of the subject people, was charged with framing a constitution which the British Government undertook to “accept and implement forthwith”. However, there were two clauses of the statement which militated against the nationalist conception of a United India and were intended to cater to the separatist tendencies enunciated by the Muslim League and to satisfy sectional interests. It recognised “The right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides. With such non-acceding provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty’s Government will be prepared to agree upon a new constitution giving them the same full status as the Indian Union and arrived at by a procedure analogous to that here laid down.” It was a concession to Jinnah and betokened Balkanisation of the country, which was further stressed by the provision, “Whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the Constitution, it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements as far as this may be required in the new situation.” It was ostensibly an invitation to the Princes of India, particularly of the major states, to stick for their separate existence.

An important condition for the viability of the new constitution was “the signing of a treaty which shall be negotiated between His Majesty’s Government and the Constitution-making body. This treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands; it will make provision, in accordance with undertakings given His Majesty’s Government, for the protection of social and religious minorities, but will not impose any

restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in future its relationship to other member States of the British Commonwealth." In the last sentence was hidden the right of the Indian Union to secede from the empire if it so willed. But no open reference was made to secession which was conceded in the drafts made prior to the despatch of Cripp's Mission. The clause relating to treaty safeguarding British obligations towards the protection of racial and religious minorities, imposed restrictions on the freedom of the Indian Union and brought in the British Government almost in the capacity of an arbiter where the commercial and financial interests of the Europeans were concerned or special privileges of the Muslim and other minority communities were involved, Thus the provisions relating to the future were not free from objection as they impinged on the absolute freedom of the new Union.

The last paragraph (e) contained proposals for the immediate present. It was specifically stated that "during the critical period of the war and until the new constitution can be framed, His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain the control and direction of the defence of India as part of their war effort, but the task of organising the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the cooperation of the people of India." Hence the "leaders of the principal sections of Indian people" were invited to participate "in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and the United Nations" which would enable them "to help in the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India". In his press conference on the occasion, Cripps had definitely stated that "the Constituent Assembly can start with a declaration of independence" and that the new Union of India was free to secede from the empire and even declare that it did not want the Governor-General. It related to the indeterminate future if and when the war was decided in favour of the British. Regarding interim arrangement, Cripps, declaration was in a sense an elaboration of the August Offer, which involved expansion of the Executive Council functioning under the Constitution of 1935. He had told the Viceroy that except for

retaining "control of Defence", His Majesty's Government would welcome "participation of others, to any extent that that His Excellency desired". Ostensibly it meant that all other Departments might be transferred to Indian hands. In answer to a question, Cripps is reported to have observed "you cannot change the constitution. All you can do is to change the covention of the constitution. You can turn the Executive Council into a Cabinet". In his conversations with Abul Kalam Azad, the Congress President, he had told him that the Council might be composed of Indians alone, and that the position of the Viceroy would be akin to that of the king vis a vis the Cabinet in Whitehall, and he would be bound by the advice of his Council and "that power would vest into the Council as it vests with the British Cabinet." This is borne out further by the letter which Azad wrote to Cripps on 11 April and which was not contradicted by the latter. The Congress President categorically asserted that Cripps had told him "that there would be a National Government which would function as a Cabinet and that the position of the Viceroy would be analogous to that of the king in England vis a vis his Cabinet". Stress was laid in the declaration on the reservation of defence and over-all stretegy by the War Cabinet, as it "must be dealt with by them as part of the world war effort," and as such "the direction of that defence must rest in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief under the War Cabinet and their highest staff officers". But Cripps offered to the Indian Government "an effective share in the Defence counsels", and to enable it to have "full voice in this central control of strategy" defensive and offensive, not only in India itself but in all the international theatres of war, its representatives would be present in the War Cabinet and Pacific Council. Also Indians would paticipate in peace-making.

Apparently in the light of Cripps advocacy the Cabinet statement appeared to be of a far-reaching character which at one stroke would solve the Indian problem. In the future there would be independence, constitution being framed by Indians, and the concept of a Union was also stressed. For the satisfaction of the Muslim League there was the provision of provincial option, though Cripps hoped that eventually a

united India would be possible. For the interim period was held out the prospect of national government, with the preponderance of Indian members in the Council of Viceroy, he operating as merely a constitutional head with all powers vested in the Council itself and the India Office yielding place to Dominion Office in regulating India's position in the Commonwealth. And if Cripps was interpreting the mind of Cabinet truly, there should have been no real problem in associating the Congress with the new venture. The Congress also seemed to be prepared to accept the proposal for the immediate if it was convinced that Indian Government will have an effective voice in defence matters. Hence discussions between the Congress and Cripps hinged on the definite issue of the powers and functions of the Indian member of the Council, holding the defence portfolio, in relation to those exercised by the Commander-in-Chief who would function with responsibility to the War Cabinet. The Working Committee resolution of 2 April, which was not published in deference to the wishes of Sir Stafford Cripps, though a copy was given to him, laid stress on the vital subject of defence, which "during wartime is all important and covers almost every sphere of life and administration. To take away defence from the sphere of responsibility at this stage is to reduce that responsibility to a farce and nullity". Hence it demanded "full responsibility being cast upon" the people of India. Azad had therefore sought for a clear exposition of the respective spheres of the two dignitaries, the Commander-in-Chief and the Indian Defence Member, which in essence meant the demarcation of the respective responsibilities of the War Cabinet and the Indian Government. On 7 April, Cripps in his letter to the Congress President, gave an outline of the arrangement he envisaged with the consent of His Majesty's Government. In this scheme the Commander-in-Chief was to have a seat in the Executive Council as "War Member" having "full control over all the war activities of the armed forces in India subject to the control of His Majesty's Government and the War Cabinet upon which body a representative Indian should sit". In addition to the War Member, there would be an Indian representative member in the Executive Council having control over such "sections of

the Department of Defence which can organisationally be separated immediately" from the War Department as well as the Defence Coordination Department and some other functions of the Government of India directly related to defence. The subjects were enumerated in two annexures, and were the following:—public relations; demobilization and post-war reconstructions ; petroleum supply; Indian representation in the Eastern Group Supply Council; amenities for and welfare of troops; canteens; stationary and printing of forms for the army; reception, accommodation and social arrangements for all foreign missions, representatives and officers; denial policy; policy of evacuation from threatened lands; signals coordination; and economic welfare. These functions were so minor and inconsiderable that the Working Committee could not accept them. Thereupon a formula was suggested which was improved upon by the Working Committee. The difference between the two was that while one listed the subjects reserved for the Defence Member, the other would enumerate those reserved for the War Member, leaving the rest to the Indian Member for defence. The revised formula was further amended by Cripps which expressly assigned to the Commander-in-Chief the control of war activities of the armed forces and to exercise functions listed".<sup>1</sup> The remaining functions were to be discharged by the Defence Member. However, no list of such functions was prepared and even when the Working Committee asked for one to enable it to arrive at some decision, the list was not provided either then or at any time later. Cripps discussed the revised formula with the Viceroy who did not favour the proposed allocation of subjects between the War and Defence Member. He had also telegraphed it to His Majesty's Government "as the basis on which negotiations were proceeding and with a strong recommendation for its

1. These functions were governmental relations of General Headquarters, Naval Headquarters and Air Headquarters; examining and sanctioning all proposals emanating from them; representing the policy of Government on all questions connected with war origination in these headquarters, acting as channel of communication between the Government of India and His Majesty's Government on all such questions, and acting as liaison between the headquarters and Departments of Government.

acceptance. He urged that without it there was no prospect of success, but on this basis there was considerable chance of securing the agreement of the Congress. Simultaneously, the Viceroy communicated his own views to His Majesty's Government, who decided that it could not agree, especially during the period of war, to lessening in any material respect the powers of the Commander-in-Chief. Sir Stafford Cripps felt that he was unable to proceed further, and the negotiations came to an end". (Menon)

The Working Committee had termed the proposals made by Cripps as "entirely unsatisfactory", as "both the approach and the allocation of subjects were, in our opinion, wrong, and there was no real transfer of responsibility for Defence to representative Indians in the National Government". It emphasised that "such transfer is essential for the successful defence of the country, for on it depends the full mobilization of the war-potential of the country". The Working Committee, perhaps under the influence of Louis Johnson, President Roosevelt's representative, was prepared to accept the arrangement making the Commander-in-Chief responsible for war activities, but insisted on a substantial share of defence matters being left for control by the Indian Council which was, in its eye, to function as a National Government. The Committee made its stand clear when it wrote, "the general approach is that the National Government is responsible for the entire government of the country including its defence. But, in view of the war and the obvious necessity of allowing full scope for war operations to the Commander-in-Chief, functions relating to the conduct of the war are delegated to him and are to be exercised by him for the duration of the war. He will, in effect, have full control of these operations and of the war activities of the armed forces in India". Cripps' revised formula attempted to meet their viewpoint, but by ignoring the demand for specification of the functions of the Defence Member made adjustment impossible. The Working Committee therefore was unable to accept it. In his letter to Cripps on 10 March, Azad commented that the revised formula "was so widely and comprehensively framed that it was difficult for us to know what the actual allocation of subjects and departments, as

between the Defence Department and the War Department, would be". The request for illustrative list was never attended to, and Cripps merely referred to the old list which was wholly unsatisfactory. Thus the differences on the subject of defence were of such a magnitude that a settlement was not possible; and though other reasons were there, the final break came because of this gap between the two viewpoints. Largely the responsibility for failure on this ground must rest with the Viceroy and the War Cabinet, whose preparedness for a settlement may be seriously doubted. This is borne out by the correspondence between Cripps and the War Cabinet. Churchill did not want him to commit the Government in any way and on April 9, he informed Cripps. "It is essential to bring the whole matter back to Cabinet's plan which you went out to urge, with only such modifications as are agreed to be put forward". The Viceroy was opposed to the entire move from the commencement of Cripps' mission, particularly because of his being neglected into the negotiations and his conservative leanings. Churchill had agreed to the mission largely under American pressure, but he did not want any change which might detract from the entire responsibility for war operations as well as Indian administration being retained by the government and Parliament of England. It was naturally therefore for the War Cabinet to reject the unwarranted statement by Cripps that the Executive Council might function as a Cabinet by evolving necessary convention, pending alteration in the Statute. They informed the Viceroy on April 10, that "there can be no question of any connection limiting in any way your (Viceroy's) power under existing constitution and no departure from this can be contemplated during the war". Such a categorical denial of the assurance given by Cripps to the Congress that by convention the powers of the Viceroy might be restricted and he function merely as constitutional head, made further continuance of negotiations meaningless, and Sir Stafford Cripps decided to break the conversations and abruptly planned his departure back, which was done on 12 April.

The Congress announced its rejection of the scheme on 11 April by publishing the Working Committee resolution of 2 April which had been kept in abeyance pending negotiations

on the subject of defence. It stressed that to enable India to fully participate in war effort in line with the progressive forces of the world, it was essential that her freedom be recognised "for only the realisation of present freedom could light the flame which could illumine millions of hearts and move them to action". The Committee recognised that the War Cabinet's proposals admitted the principle of self-determination for the people of India in an uncertain future, but regretted "that this is fettered and circumscribed and certain provisions have been introduced which gravely imperil the development of a free and united nation and the establishment of a democratic state". In this context it referred firstly to the provision about the representatives of the Indian States in the Constituent Assembly which ignored the right of their people in choosing their representatives. It also feared that "such state may in many ways become barriers to the growth of Indian freedom, enclaves where foreign authority still prevails and where the possibility of maintaining foreign armed forces has been stated to be likely contingency and a perpetual menace to the freedom of the people of the states as well as the rest of India". Its second objection related to the provision about the non-accession of a province to the Union, which "is also a severe blow to the conception of Indian unity and an apple of discord likely to generate trouble in the provinces, and which may lead to further difficulties in the way of the Indian States merging themselves in the Indian Union". "Nevertheless", it stated, "the Committee cannot think in terms of compelling the people in any territorial unit to remain in an Indian Union against their declared and established will". It emphasised the principle that "each territorial unit should have the fullest possible autonomy within the Union consistently with a strong national state". Finally reference was made to the provisions concerning the interim period, which it termed "vague and incomplete", involving "no vital changes in the present structure". Reserving defence under British control made Indian responsibility "a farce and a nullity", and an evidence that Indian government could not "function as a free and independent government during the pendency of the war". Hence the proposals of the War Cabinet were rejected. The Congress President



Maulana Azad gave expression to the annoyance and disappointment of the Working Committee in his letter of 10 April to Cripps. It is clear from this statement that notwithstanding the objectionable features of Cripps proposals regarding future change, the Working Committee was prepared to seriously consider the provisions regarding the immediate steps contained in para (e) of the declaration, but found them to be vague as no indication was given of the "arrangements or governmental and other changes would be made in the present". To remove this deficiency, Cripps in his talks had referred to the formation of a "National Government which would deal with all matters except Defence". To inspire the people with the belief that they were fighting for their country's freedom under national leadership, such a change was immediately essential. But in the ultimate analysis the assertions about National Government, Cabinet, etc. were found to camouflage merely the existing system of government, "difference being one of degree and not of kind". Azad made it clear that they did not press for any statutory change but wanted merely definite assurances and conventions which would enable the new government "to function as a free government, the members of which act as members of a Cabinet in a constitutional government". But that hope had been frustrated. However, the Congress was prepared to assume responsibility for defence if a truly National Government was formed.

Cripps in his rejoinder reminded the Congress of the responsibility of His Majesty's Government for defence and need for unity of command which would be incompatible with the demand for leaving substantial powers to the Indian Defence Member. Also he charged the Congress of making suggestion for change in the constitution at that late hour, which was a travesty of facts, for a "Cabinet Government with full power" would not be possible "without constitutional changes of a complicated character". Moreover he raised the communal bogey by stating that "the nominated Cabinet" introduced by convention, "would be responsible to no one but itself, could not be removed and would in fact constitute an absolute dictatorship of the majority. This suggestion would be rejected by all minorities in India, since it would subject all

of them to a permanent and autocratic majority in the Cabinet. Nor it would be consistent with the pledges already given by His Majesty's Government to protect the rights of those minorities". He regretted the refusal of the Working Committee to accept the plan "which could have brought together all the different communities and sections of the Indian people". In his last press conference, Cripps repeated the inability of the War Cabinet to effect any change in the defence structure at a time when maximum speed and efficiency were required to oppose the enemy who was almost at the gate. He further reiterated that the national government of Congress conception would be against the interests of the minorities for whose protection the British Government was pledged. This misrepresentation was made to satisfy his ego which had been hurt by the denial of confidence in him by the War Cabinet and the opposition by Linlithgow to his handling of the situation. Cripps left on 12 April, and made the request of Roosevelt for further negotiations nugatory. Churchill was happy at the turn of events, though he did not omit to shed crocodile tears. Later in December 1946, he "made it abundantly clear that His Majesty's Government had not been willing to support Sir Stafford Cripps to the extent to which he himself was prepared to go" (Menon). Amery in his speech in the House of Commons again emphasised that the Congress proposal for an irresponsible national government "was the one thing which the Muslims and other minorities were determined at all costs to reject...there was, therefore, never any question in our view of conceding that demand because it was, in fact, if not in intention, a demand which precluded all agreed cooperation in India". He stated that the object of affording India full freedom by "constitutional arrangement of her own devising and suited to her own peculiar conditions" had not been withdrawn, though the programme to meet the interim situation had lapsed because Cripps failed to "secure the whole-hearted cooperation of the Congress as well as the other political parties". With this ended the force which Cripps had been commissioned to enact. The Muslim League rejected the offer as it harped on the unity of India and thereby negated the demand for Pakistan.

There has been speculation regarding the reasons for the failure of Cripps Mission. He puts the blame on Gandhiji which was repudiated by the latter. Azad felt that the War Cabinet might have sent fresh instructions, to proceed beyond which might call for his repudiation. Hodson, the constitutional Adviser of the Viceroy, has put the blame on Cripps for making "vital commitment without the clearest understanding with the Viceroy" and his agreement to it. Menon also believes that lack of cohesion and understanding between Cripps and Linlithgow wrecked the chances of success. Harold Laski blamed Cripps for the collapse of the mission because he came to India "in a take it or leave it mood". That led to the impression that he was less concerned with the "achievement of Indian freedom than of a coup de main in the propagandist art among our allies". There is no doubt that the whole plan was contemplated with the object of impressing American and Chinese opinion with British intent to meet nationalist Indian demand for independence, without being prepared to effect any real change in the governmental structure. The refusal of the Congress to be influenced by the advocacy of Cripps in selling the empty scheme served the British interest and silence American demand for accepting Indian demand for independence and there by gain their willing cooperation for war effort. Churchill was happy that this end was served without any loss to their absolute control over India. The abrupt return of Sir Stafford Cripps and his imputing the blame for the breakdown on the Congress, as well as the speeches in the Parliament on the Cripps Mission, made the breach more complete between the nationalist India and the rulers. The emphasis by Cripps and Amery on the attitude of the minorities, which both of them interpreted as one of opposition to "any further devolution of Defence responsibilities" or acceptance of a national government, as well the latter's "temerity to chide the Indian leaders for not moving one step to meet each other without Cripps or in his presence", fortified the feeling that Britain would not relinquish hold on India without pressure being exercised by the people. Their misrepresentation of Congress demand as being motivated by the desire "to perpetuate its rule to the exclusion or detriment of the minorities' interest",

was in utter contrast to the Congress declarations regarding mixed cabinet and safeguards for the rights of minorities and even leaving the formation of government to Jinnah. Also Cripps' charge that Gandhiji was a "defeatist who wanted to treat with the Japanese to secure India's freedom" was a lie which deliberately misconstrued the whole philosophy of the Mahatma and ridiculed his implicit faith in non-violence. Gandhiji had emphasised in his statement of April 13, that "attainment of independence is an impossibility till we have solved the communal tangle", and had even noted on August 8 that "the Congress will have no objection to the British Government transferring all the powers it today exercises to the Muslim League on behalf of the whole of India". His admonition to offer complete non-violent non-cooperation to the advance of Japanese forces belie the charge of his defeatism and truck with the Japanese. All this propaganda, whatever its motive was, did make the Congress stiff in its attitude to British imperialism and prepared the stage for the demand that the British quit India, even leaving it to anarchy.

The infructuous mission and the mode of its withdrawal "left a bad taste in the mouth", as Gandhiji put it. It was then that he expressed the demand for the first time, that British withdraw from India. He wrote, "My firm opinion is that the British should leave India now in an orderly manner and not run the risk that they did in Singapore and Malaya and Burma. The act would mean courage of a high order, confession of human limitations, and right doing by India". In an article in *Harijan* dated April 26, Gandhiji wrote that British war preparations were intended solely "for the defence of the British Empire, whatever may be asserted to the contrary". Further he added "If the British left India to her fate as they had to leave Singapore, non-violent India would not lose anything. Probably, the Japanese would leave India alone". In conclusion he affirmed "whatever the consequences, therefore, to India, her real safety and that of Britain too lie in orderly and timely British withdrawal from India. All talk of treaties with the princes and obligations towards minorities are a British creation designed for the preservation of the British rule and the British interests. It must melt before the stern reality that faces all of us". He

believed that when the third party, the British, had gone the Hindus and Muslims would compose their differences and unity would come about. Henceforth the thesis that the British quit India was developed and was formally enunciated by the Working Committee in July, and confirmed by the All-India Congress Committee in Bombay early in August. Mass civil disobedience was its necessary sequel as that was the only weapon for non-violent India to employ for regaining independence and maintaining freedom in the face of Japanese aggression or Axis advance. There was no abatement in the Japanese peril threatening to engulf India in the east. April saw the fall of Rangoon and rapid advance of Japanese armed forces upto the Indian borders. Danger developed to the eastern provinces where a state of panic prevailed, and intense resentment was brewing at the measures adopted by the British for offering resistance to the invading forces. Construction of air-fields and bases for armed resistance was conducted without regard to the interests of the people, who were dislodged from their homes and deprived of land and their tools of production and means of communication without compensation or only meagre return. The scorched-earth policy sent a thrill of horror which made people all the more panicky. British appreciations regarding the turn of war were based on the probability of the eastern regions succumbing to Japanese advance. In one of the plans the military planning body contemplated stage by stage withdrawal from the rest of India and merely hold on to the sea line on the west coast to retain a base for return later. The declining morale of the people, the defeatist mentality characterising military planning and the rising intensity of misery in the country with rising prices and paucity of consumer goods, influenced Congress thinking which was growing increasingly in favour of British withdrawal. In this situation, the All India Congress Committee met in Allahabad at the end of April 1942 and pointed to the direction which the Congress would adopt to meet the dreadful situation.

Before the Committee met on April 29, Rajagopalachari had sounded a discordant note in the two resolutions which had been adopted by his supporters in the Madras legislature, and which he moved at the A.I.C.C. session to be rejected by a

huge majority. The first of these "recommended the acceptance of Pakistan as a basis of settlement between the Congress and the Muslim League". It asserted that "to sacrifice the chances of the formation of a national government for the doubtful advantage of maintaining a controversy over the unity of India is the most unwise policy, and that it has become necessary to choose the lesser evil". The second resolution favoured restoration of responsible government in Madras. The rejection of the first of these led to the passage of a counter-resolution which affirmed "that any proposal to disintegrate India by giving liberty to any component State or territorial unit to secede from the Indian Union or Federation will be detrimental to the best interests of the people of the different States and provinces and the country as a whole and the Congress, therefore, cannot agree to any such proposal". Unity of India was stressed and thereby Rajgopalachari was repudiated. The Congress Committee indicated the path to be adopted in the situation of the imminence of Japanese invasion and the British determination to exploit Indian resources in men and material, irrespective of the hostile views of the Congress which represented the will of the people. Its main resolution was a frank enunciation of its policy towards the Japanese as well as British control in India. It stated, "India's participation in the war was a purely British act. If she were free, she would have determined her own policy and might have kept out of the war, although her sympathies would in any event have been with the victims of aggression. The All India Congress Committee is convinced that India will attain her freedom through her own struggle and will retain it likewise. The present crisis as well as the negotiations with Sir Stafford Cripps make it impossible for the Congress to consider any schemes or proposals which retain, even in partial measure, British control and British authority, in India. Not only the interests of India, but also Britain's safety and world peace and freedom, demand that Britain must abandon her hold on India. It is on the basis of independence alone that India can deal with Great Britain or other nations. The Committee repudiates the idea that freedom can come to India through interference or invasion by any foreign nation, whatever the professions of that nation may be.

In case an invasion takes place, it must be resisted. Such resistance can only take place in the form of non-violent non-cooperation, as the British Government have prevented the organization of the national defence by the people in any other way. The Committee would, therefore, expect the people of India to offer complete non-violent non-cooperation to the invading forces and not to render any assistance to them". It exhorted the people to intensively work the constructive programme, and more especially that of self-sufficiency and self-protection in all parts of the country. The theme enunciated in this resolution that the British should withdraw from India and declare her free, not after the conclusion of the war but forthwith, was developed further by Gandhiji in his articles, interviews and letters in the months immediately following the Allahabad session of the All India Congress Committee, the climax being reached in the Working Committee resolution of 14 July and Congress Committee resolution of 8 August 1942, which openly called upon the British to 'quit India' and renounce imperialism.

In these communications he 'explained and elaborated' the 'quit India' programme. Tendulkar writes that "there was a new urgency and passion in his speech and writing". In an article in *Harijan* of 3 May, he categorically stated "that the British presence is the incentive for Japanese attack", and the decision to withdraw and leave India would compel the Japanese to "reconsider their plans". In that event the invaders would get confounded and "an atmosphere will be set up for the ending of an unnatural state of things that has dominated and choked Indian life". He emphasised that the time was ripe for the British and the Indians "to be reconciled to complete separation from each other. That way and that way alone his the safety of both and, shall I say, the world". In his interview with the representative of the *News Chronicle* on 14 May, he went to the length of saying, "Under my proposal, they have to leave India in God's hands—but in the modern parlance, to anarchy, and that anarchy may lead to internecine warfare for some time or to unrestrained dacoities. From these a true India will rise in the place of the false one we see". In his writings he dilated on non-violent non-cooperation against the invader

as also to combat internal disorder, as well as against British imperialism. He made it clear that he was opposed wholly to foreign intervention and seeking help from the Axis powers for the freedom of India. Gandhiji also emphasised the view that it was British presence which accentuated communal discord, and their orderly withdrawal "will automatically remove communal distemper. So far as I can see, the two communities are unable to think or see things in their proper perspective, as long as they are under the influence of the third power". He did not believe that his programme would prejudice the freedom of China or help Japanese victory, rather the contrary would be true as Britain would "gain in a free India an ally" in the cause of human freedom. He further asserted that "the withdrawal of the hated power is the only way to rid the land of the debasing hatred. The cause gone, the hatred must cease".

Louis Fischer, an American journalist, conversed with Gandhiji for a week at Sevagram and it was in these interviews that the concept of British withdrawal from India was fully expounded. Mahatma Gandhi admitted that "Cripps fiasco" inspired the idea that the British must go which would be in the interest of all. He wanted complete and irrevocable withdrawal of the British, though not physical withdrawal. What he insisted upon was "the transfer of political power from the British to Indian people" and that too in the immediate present so as to help China and Russia. He was prepared to let the United Nations armies stay in India and their using railway and other organisations to defeat Japanese and Fascist aggression after a treaty had been contracted between a free India and the United Nations. The first task of a national government would be to enter into such a treaty "for the defensive operations against the aggressive powers, it being common cause that India will have nothing to do with any fascist powers and India would be morally bound to help the United Nations". He strongly repudiated the charge of his being pro-Japanese. His recipe of non-violent non-cooperation was to cure the defeatist mentality of the people and wean them away from any pro-Axis sympathies. Summing up his attitude to Fischer he affirmed "this unnatural prostration of a great nation...must



cease, if the victory of the allies is to be ensured. They lack the moral basis". Replying to Grover, another American journalist, Gandhiji gave a glimpse of the rage which was burning in him and the passion which possessed him. In case of the rejection of his proposal for British withdrawal he was prepared to make a move which will be felt by the whole world. It may not interfere with the movement of British troops, but it is sure to engage British attention. It would be wrong of them to reject my proposal and say India should remain a slave in order that British may win or be able to help China. I cannot accept that degrading position...We have followed non-embarrassment policy so far. We will follow it even now. But we cannot allow the British Government to exploit it in order to strengthen the strangle-hold on India. And today it amounts to that. The way, for instance, in which thousands are being asked to vacate their homes with nowhere to go to, no land to cultivate, no resources to fall back upon, is the reward of our non-embarrassment. This should be impossible in a free country. I cannot tolerate India submitting to this kind of treatment. It means greater degradation and servility, and when a whole nation accepts servility, it means good bye for ever to freedom". In his letters to Chiang Kai Shek and President Roosevelt, Gandhiji clearly elaborated his point that it was in the interest of converting the ill-will towards Great Britain into goodwill for the allied cause, that he demanded immediate freedom for India as that would "enable the millions to play their part in the present war". Throughout the summer months, Gandhiji continued to press the demand for British withdrawal, expound his attitude towards the United Nations, and the implications of the non-violent non-cooperation. The British had no alternative to the Cripps proposals which had been spurned by nationalist India; and as Louis Fischer has rightly stated that to "shake off the oppressive frustration of inaction" India "might well have gone war mad", Nehru declared, "Passivity on our part at this moment would be suicidal. It would destroy and emasculate us". Gandhi felt that India was impotent. "The fear of India's emasculation was an ever present motive", and as such, as Fischer has put it, "both Nehru and Gandhi

were concerned with building up the manhood of their people. Gandhi wanted to give them inner strength through confidence". At a time when the British were losing ground in both the western and eastern theatres of war, the Indian people were smarting under excessive misery born of British war measures, and Congress "was feeling impatient for action which would offer a suitable reply to the provocative and lying speeches of Cripps, Amery and others". The Working Committee met at Wardha from 6 to 14 July and adopted a resolution which determined future line of action.

By one resolution it dwelt upon the hardships which followed in the wake of war preparations such as the acquisition of land, requisitioning of boats and vehicles and scarcity of salt, and asked the people to refuse compliance. By the other resolution, the Working Committee declared "that British rule in India must end immediately, not because foreign domination, even at its best is an evil in itself and a continuing injury to the subject people, but because India in bondage can play no effective part in defending herself and affecting the fortunes of the war that is desolating humanity". It affirmed that freedom of India was necessary for the safety of the world. It referred to the Congress policy of non-embarrassment and symbolic character of individual civil disobedience in the hope that real power would be transferred to popular representatives. But these hopes were falsified as Cripps proposals showed there was no change in the British Government's attitude towards India. This led to frustration which has created strong ill will against Britain and "a growing satisfaction at the success of Japanese arms". This development if unchecked might "inevitably lead to a passive acceptance of aggression" which would involve "degradation of the Indian people and continuation of their subjection". The Congress wished to change ill-will into good will towards the British which was possible only when "India feels the glow of freedom". Further it referred to the communal tangle the solution of which had been made impossible by the presence of the foreign power pursuing a policy of divide and rule. Only after the end of foreign domination would the people of all classes come together to form a provisional government,

representative of all sections of the people of India, and pave the way for a constitution framed by a Constituent Assembly and hammering out a treaty between British and Indian people. It reaffirmed its desire not to cause embarrassment to the allied powers and stressed the Congress willingness to the stationing of their armed forces in India to "resist the Japanese aggression and to protect and help China". The Committee did not press for the "physical withdrawal of all Britishers from India", and hoped that the British Government would accept the very "reasonable and just proposal" in the interest of India, Britain and the United Nations. In case of its failure, however, the Congress would be "reluctantly compelled to utilize all the non-violent strength it might have gathered since 1920" under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The die was thus cast but a policy of such far-reaching character needed endorsement by the All-India Congress Committee which was summoned to meet on 8 August in Bombay.

This interval of few weeks was utilised by the Government of India in making thorough preparations to crush the movement and give no quarter to the Congressmen. Circulars were issued to the provincial governments to mobilise public opinion against the Congress resolution, even to the extent of misrepresenting its character and making it sound as helpful to the Axis powers. Jinnah also reacted violently against it and thereby gave handle to the Government in its opposition to the Congress programme. He called the resolution as "the culminating point in the policy and programme of Mr. Gandhi and his Hindu Congress of blackmailing the British and coercing them to concede a system of government and transfer power to that government which would establish a Hindu Raj immediately under the aegis of the British bayonets, thereby throwing the Muslims and other minorities and interests at the mercy of the Congress Raj". Mahatma Gandhi, on his side, in his writings in *Harijan* and interviews with foreign journalists presented a clear picture of his programme and the real import of the resolution. He told Mr. Emeny that the programme would cover "every activity of a strictly non-violent character included in a mass movement", including breach of salt law and calling upon Government servants and

labour to withdraw. But the movement would develop gradually as he wanted "to guard against a sudden outburst of anarchy or a state of things which may be calculated to invite Japanese aggression". Hence he would "take every precaution I can to handle the movement gently, but I would not hesitate to go to the extremest limit, if I find that no impression is produced on the British Government or the allied powers". He would be prepared to go to the Viceroy and give time to the British Government to accept the demand. It was to be his biggest movement. In all these statements he reiterated his resolve not to embarrass the United Nations, but insisted that his civil disobedience was meant to lend moral strength to their resistance against Fascist aggression. He appealed to the Japanese to desist from aggression and invited American friends not to be misled by British propaganda, but to reasonably and without prejudice appreciate the implications of the quit India demand which would turn illwill into active goodwill and be of immense value to the allied cause. Hence he appealed to them "to look upon the immediate recognition of India's independence as a war measure of first-class magnitude". Untrammelled by the speeches of Cripps and Amery and the propaganda against him and the Congress, as well as the alarmist cries of Jinnah, Savarkar and others, the all-India Congress Committee met on 8 August and adopted the famous 'quit India' resolution.

It endorsed the Working Committee resolution and emphasised that the fast developing situation had made "the immediate ending of British rule in India an urgent necessity, both for the sake of India and the success of the cause of the United Nations. The continuation of that rule is degrading and enfeebling India and making her progressively less capable of defending herself and of contributing to the cause of world freedom". It expressed sympathy for Russia and China in their peril and asserted that the continuance of imperial traditions, on which the policies of Britain and other powers were based, would not be conducive to democracy and security against aggression. Hence it affirmed that "The ending of British rule in India is thus a vital and immediate issue on which depend the future of the war and the success of freedom

and democracy. A free India will assure this success by throwing all her great resources in the struggle for her freedom and against the aggression of Nazim and Facism and imperialism". India's freedom would give to the United Nations "moral and spiritual leadership of the world" for otherwise India in bondage would "continue to be the symbol of British imperialism and the taint of imperialism will affect the fortunes of all the United Nations". Hence immediate freedom of India was essential for "only the glow of freedom now can release that energy and enthusiasm of millions of people which will immediately transform the nature of the war". The resolution also spelt the steps which would be taken subsequently, the first of which would be the formation of a provisional government with "the cooperation of the principal parties and groups in the country" and whose principal task would be to "defend India and resist aggression with all the armed as well as the non-violent forces at its command". The constitution to be framed later by the Consritent Assembly would be a federal one, with largest measure of autonomy to the federating units, all residury powers vesting in them. The resolution also emphasised the freedom of all other Asiatic nations under foreign domination, and that Burma, Malaya, Indo-China, the Dutch East Indies, Iran and Iraq must attain complete freedom and should not be placed under the rule of any colonial power. Another basic principle emphasised was that of world federation which would facilitiate disarmament and world peace. The A.I.C.C. appealed to Britain and the United Nations once again to do justice to India, failing which it resolved "to sanction, for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass-struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale, so that the country might utilize all non-violent strength it has gathered during the last twenty-two years of peaceful struggle. Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji". It further emphasised that the struggle was not for gaining power for the Congress but for the whole people of India. Thus was given the call for sacrifice in the cause of freedom.

Gandhiji in his speech, as well as inteviews with foreign correspondents, elucidated the purpose of the resolution and

outlined the steps necessary before launching the movement. First he would plead with the Viceroy to accept the demand and only on its failure would the mass disobedience begin, however there would be a gap of two or three weeks between them. This interval must be occupied by constructive programme. He gave the *mantra* of 'Do or Die', that "we shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery"; and exhorted the people not to "rest till freedom is achieved"; and be prepared to "lay down their lives in the attempt to achieve it". The emphasis was as ever on nonviolence and for every one to be his own guide within the four corners of the principle of non-violence. In the draft instructions which Gandhiji placed before the Working Committee on August 7, he had enjoined the people to fast for twenty-four hours on the day of hartal, but not to take out processions or hold meetings in cities. No pressure should be exercised on the shop-keepers to close their shops. But such meetings should be held in the villages and Congressmen should explain the meaning of contemplated satyagraha which was directed only against British rule, not against English men as such. There was emphasis again on the new government being of the whole nation which would belong neither to the Congress nor to any political group or any party. Gandhiji asserted that "every Congressman is his own leader and the servant of the whole nation", and that "every Indian, who desires the freedom of India and fully believes in the weapon of truth and non-violence for the purpose of this struggle" should regard himself a Congressman. Spirit of communalism and hatred against any Indian or Englishman were forbidden and anyone who harboured these was to keep aloof. Every satyagrahi was to "ceaselessly carry on the struggle till independence is achieved. He should vow that he will be free or die". There was to be no interference in government factories, railway post-offices, etc. at the moment but occasion might arise when people in government offices might be called upon to resign and join the movement. Members of the legislature and municipal bodies must resign, so also students in government controlled institutions, must come out and those above sixteen years of age should join the satyagraha. No one should submit

to coercion or injustice. Salt should be manufactured, land tax should be refused. These were some of the instructions, others might be issued when the occasion arose. This directive was however never released.

But before Gandhiji could give the call for the commencement of such a satyagraha, the Government of India decided to meet the challenge, and in their resolution published on 8 August, they misrepresented that the Congress was making preparations "for unlawful and, in some cases, violent activities directed among other things to the interruption of communications and public utility services, organisation of strikes, tampering with the loyalty of the Government servants and interference with defence measures including recruitment". Hence they forbade discussion of a demand, "the acceptance of which would plunge India into confusion and anarchy internally, and would paralyse India's effort in the common cause of human freedom". This was a travesty of truth and excuse for the barbaric repression which was let loose. Before the day dawned on 9 August, Gandhiji together with all the members of the Working Committee in Bombay was arrested and detained without trial. He was held in Aghakhan's palace near Poona and the others in Ahmadnagar fort. Simultaneously arrests were made in all the provinces and cities nabbing all Congress leaders, provincial or local, thus leaving the movement leaderless, and thereby provoking resort to all activities violent in nature which the government resolution enunciated and which found no place in Congress resolution. Mahatma Gandhi wrote on 14 August a strong letter to the Viceroy exposing the falsity of government stand and charged him of precipitating the crisis. He called the reference to violent activities as a "gross distortion of the reality". as "violence was never contemplated at an stage". He ridiculed the government claim "of defendign India, of maintaining India's capacity to wage war, of safeguarding India's interests, of holding the balance between the different sections of her people without fear or favour". He called it "a mockery of truth after the experience in Malaya, Singapore and Burma". He wrote "it is sad to find the Government of India claiming to hold the balance between

the parties for whose creation and existence it is itself demonstrably responsible". In conclusion he wrote, "if not withstanding the common cause, the Government's reply to the Congress demand is hasty repression, they will not wonder if I draw the inference that it was not so much the allied cause that weighed with the British Government, as the unexpressed determination to cling to the possession of India as an indispensable part of imperial policy. The determination led to the rejection of the Congress demand and precipitated repression. The present mutual slaughter on a scale never known to history is suffocating enough. But the slaughter of truth accompanying the butchery and enforced by the falsity of which the resolution is reaking adds strength to the Congress position". The Viceroy refused to reconsider the policy adopted by his government. There was a spate of ordinances and all processes of law were discarded. Freedom of speech and writing was taken away which led to wild rumours and added fuel to the fire which was raging in the hearts of people and which had led in many places to wanton destruction of government property, burning of post offices, railway stations, offices and war material as well as cutting of telegraph wires and tampering with railway tracks. Such activities were unwarranted by Congress instructions, but were indulged in as a spontaneous outbreak of violence by the people against the incarceration of their beloved leaders, and inspired by clandestine directions, given by some secret organisation, agents provocateurs or fifth columnists working in favour of the Japanese. The government reprisal was most brutal and people were shot, houses burnt, women dishonoured and their possessions looted. Armed forces as well as special constabulary were detailed for this purpose. The heaviest weight fell on the eastern regions in Bihar and United Provinces as well as in parts of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

People's action was a reaction against police repression and gagging of public feelings, and then, as Tendulkar has written, "all these suppressed emotions broke out and crowds gathered in cities and rural areas and came in conflict with the police and the military. They attacked especially what seemed to them the symbols of British rule and power, the police stations,



post offices and railway stations; they cut the telegraph and telephone wires, they removed rails and damaged bridges". Within a week of the arrests of leaders, about "250 railway stations were damaged or destroyed, over 500 post offices were attacked. The railway system of Bihar and the eastern districts of the United Provinces was dislocated for many weeks. Communications were disrupted over a large part of India". Over 150 police stations were attacked. Besides other government buildings. On the government side punishment was immeasurably harsh. About 900 civilians were killed upto November 1942 and many more injured. "The unarmed and leaderless mobs faced the police and military firing on 538 occasions, and they were also machine-gunned from low-flying aircraft. Collective fine imposed came to 90 lacs. Over 60000 persons were jailed. Thousands of Congressmen went underground for many months and unlawful Congress radio announced news of happenings. No news was given by papers about the labour strike in Ahmadabad, closing of Jamshedpur steel works, military occupation of the Banaras Hindu-University, air-bombing of Ballia, harrowing tales of repression in Midnapur, military excesses in Ashta and Chemur and firing and lathi charges all over India". This way of defiance on the side of the people and violence by the government agencies went on for some time. Many Congress leaders from their hiding tried to turn popular frenzy to non-violent activities, such as holding meetings or presenting themselves for arrest; and these measures brought about the cessation of most violence. But the government repression did not abate till the end of the year when a lull was brought about. Thus came what has been styled by many writers the spontaneous revolution for which the blame must attach to the hasty action resorted to by the Government to enable it to suppress the non-violent spirit of the people. The Government used its media for maligning the Congress policy and propagating that Gandhiji was responsible for all the violence in the country, for which they quoted certain directions which were never given by him. This evoked a spirited letter from Gandhiji to the Viceroy in which he expressed his wish to go on a fast of twentyone days to seek justice from God which

was denied to him by the Viceroy and his government. The Viceroy was prepared to release him if he recanted or for the duration of the fast. But Gandhiji would not seek release and went on fast on 10 February 1943. His condition deteriorated in the first 12 days, so that on 22nd February, he had severe nausea, and pulse was imperceptible. The Government had made all preparations for his cremation and definite orders were issued to deal with popular resentment in the event of his death. Meanwhile on the part of the people prayers were held all over the country, praying for his survival. By sheer spiritual force, Gandhiji started rallying on 23 February and soon was able to complete the period of fast, and on 3 March he broke it by taking a glass of orange juice, the political effect of the fast was that once again people had outgrown the demoralisation which had set in the wake of intense repression. Activity for resolving the stalemate also began thereafter, but the British attitude was one of obstinate recalcitrance insisting on the unconditional renunciation of the Congress policy of civil disobedience and Gandhiji owning responsibility for what had happened. It was in the course of this fruitless correspondence that Linlithgow retired and was succeeded by Wavell as Viceroy. The next stage of activity began thereafter leading to the partition of the country and declaration of India's independence, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

## *Partition and Independence*

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Gandhiji very correctly believed that "independence of India as a whole is a certainly" for "passage through fire and suffering by thousands of Congressmen and sympathisers has raised the status of India and the strength of the people". The revolt of 1942 gave evidence of the "heroism, suffering and self-sacrifice" of the people, and when that state has been reached it is difficult for a foreign nation to keep them long in subjection. People's courage and power of resistance had increased immensely and the leaders were proud of the spirit then exhibited. As a devotee of truth and non-violence Mahatma Gandhi found the popular demonstration defective in so far as it had departed from non-violence, for, as he said in 1944, "India can come to her own fully by truth and non-violent measures". However, there can be no doubt that there was a strong undercurrent of lack of faith in the British sense of justice or beneficence and the revolt had fully proved to them that they were not wanted in India and no section of the Indian people wanted their rule to continue. This feeling had permeated the highest circles in Great Britain. Dr. Tara Chand has quoted from the biography of King George VI an entry into the King's diary that "He (Churchill) amazed me by saying that his colleagues and both, or all three, parties in Parliament were quite prepared to give up India to the Indians after the war. He felt they had already been talked into giving up India. Cripps, the Press and the U.S. public opinion have all contributed to make their mind up that our rule in India is wrong

and has always been wrong for India". This realisation was the success of Gandhiji. After the termination of his fast, the universal concern felt for his survival was a clear testimony of the love cherished for him and the resolve of the people to win freedom under his leadership. The barometer of popular determination was steadily rising, and it was clear that if no peaceful mode of transfer of power was possible, a violent revolution would be the only alternative. The formation of the Indian National Army under Subhash Chandra Bose and the enthusiasm which it evoked in the hearts of the mass of Indian people, despite its failure, was a sign, sure enough, that "non-violent methods did not exhaust the armoury of the struggle for independence" and under a successor of Bose the violent method of snatching power from imperial hands might succeed. Also with the end of war, it was evident that the British Empire would not be in a position to cling to power.

On 20 October 1943, Linlithgow relinquished office and was succeeded by Lord Wavell who had earlier served as commander-in-chief in India. The retiring Viceroy had tried by all means to retain the initiative in his hands for he believed that any diminution in his authority would react unfavourably on the successful prosecution of war. In that process he had used Jinnah and his Muslim League to offset Congress opposition and to obstruct progress towards independence. The British Government was then in no mood to accommodate the Congress demand for independence and, while swearing by the Cripps proposals, had no inclination to part with even a whit of the supreme power which they exercised. Linlithgow's long reign of more than seven years had witnessed severe repression, a devastating famine in Bengal and the widening gulf between the Congress and the Muslim League. By his support to Jinnah, he had encouraged the latter to enlarge the scope of the Pakistan and claim partition of India between two sovereign states formed on the basis of religion. The new ghost which he had helped to raise cast its shadow on all schemes for constitutional change and political discussions. Wavell tried to assure the people of India that his appointment did not presage any "intention to set up anything in the shape of military rule or weaken in any way the pledges and offers made to India by His Majesty's Government" which at the moment did not go

beyond the Cripps offer. Amery also denied any shift in the settled policy of helping "the development of Indian self-government." He was clear that "once peace was established, it would be difficult to deny or delay the transfer of substantial power to Indian hands", and he "set about preparing the conditions in which political power could be transferred." The war had shown a definite drift towards the final victory of the Allied cause. Russian resistance had succeeded in rolling back the tide of German advance, so that the Nazi forces were fast receding from that land. Anglo-American advance in North Africa had defeated Rommel's forces, and stage was set for the invasion of Italy. Also preparations were then being made for landing on the western coast of France to push back the Nazi forces into Germany. In the east also, Japanese advance was halted and the American forces were poised to wrest the conquests in the Pacific region, and danger of invasion on India had been eliminated. In this new set up, prospects of resolving the constitutional deadlock seemed to be bright and Wavell set the process in that direction. The greatest obstacle was, however, Jinnah's demand for Pakistan which grew more and more vehement.

Wavell's first public statement was made in the Legislative Assembly on 17 February 1944, in which he emphasised the need for "preparation for the future" which was by no means an easy problem. He stated that the British people and His Majesty's Government wished "to see India a prosperous and united country enjoying complete and unqualified self-government as a willing partner of the British Commonwealth", and emphasised that the Cripps offer was still open to those who genuinely desired the prosecution of the war and the welfare of India. But he was not prepared to release the Congress leaders unless there was willingness on their part to cooperate in the great tasks ahead, among which the "greatest was preliminary examination of the constitutional problems of India by an authoritative body of Indians." He promised government assistance in the matter and affirmed that Indians would be free to devise a method which would produce agreement in the country. Wavell's declaration about Indian unity when he said "You cannot alter geography. India is a natural unit", was an indication of British policy for a united India,

irrespective of Jinnah's demand for a partition of the country. He invited Congressmen to cooperate "in considering further problems" if they could not take part in the government then. However, he refused to release these leaders unless the policy of non-cooperation and obstruction had been withdrawn, "as a recognition of a mistaken and unprofitable policy." This statement was least likely to effect any radical change in the political situation and was denounced by the nationalist press and liberal leaders as disappointing and "not calculated to inspire hope, to remove differences or to encourage people." The Muslim League resented reference to the unity of India. In the Legislative Assembly, meanwhile, a loose combination between a few members of the Congress party and the Muslim League led to the Finance Bill being thrown out, and Bhulabhai Desai, leader of the Congress Party, declared he could not take responsibility of voting the taxes unless they had the power to direct their expenditure. In a letter to the Viceroy, about this time, Gandhiji had emphasised the necessity of India's satisfaction as a preliminary to active and real war effort on its part. He wrote, "promises for the future are valueless in the face of the world struggle in which the fortune of all nations and therefore of the whole humanity is involved. Present performance is the peremptory need of the moment if the war is to end in world peace." He criticised Viceroy's speech, of which a copy had been sent to him by Wavell. To another communication of the Viceroy seeking abandonment of the policy of non-cooperation by the Congress and its whole-hearted participation in the country's economic and political progress, Gandhiji asked for Viceroy's cooperation with the people through their elected representatives to dispel suspicion against it which was universal. At the same time Tej Bahadur Sapru, on behalf of the Non-party Conference, asked for revocation of Section 93 and restoration of ministerial government in the provinces, formation of a truly national government at the Centre by reconstructing the Viceroy's Executive Council, the release of Congress leaders and elections to the central and provincial legislatures. Wavell's response was clothed in the familiar terminology, and stalemate was not broken. In April 1944, long after the death of Kasturba Gandhi, Mahatmaji had a severe attack of malaria, from which he did not make a quick

recovery, and fearing a sudden collapse, the Government of India released him on 6 May unconditionally on medical grounds. After convalescence Gandhiji began the move to break the stalemate and by that time war situation had considerably improved in favour of the United Nations. But his initial step expressing his desire to meet the members of the Congress Working Committee and also the Viceroy did not meet with any response from the authorities. Wavell also said if Gandhiji had any definite and constructive policy he would be glad to consider it.

Mahatma Gandhi's response was contained in his interview given to Stewart Gelder, correspondent of the News Chronicle, London, on 4 July whose publication he had not authorised, though it was published by the Times of India on 11 July 1944. He said he wanted to help and not hinder the Allies, and only the Working Committee could settle the lines of future action. But he categorically affirmed "I have no intention of offering civil disobedience today. I cannot take the country back to 1942, history can never be repeated." He did not want to embarrass the British Government; but he was convinced that "unless power and responsibility are transferred from British into Indian hands" sufferings of the people could not be eliminated. He further stated that he "would be satisfied with a national government in full control of civil administration.....Such a government would be composed of persons chosen by the elected members of the Central Assembly. This would mean the declaration of the independence of India, qualified as above during the war." Further he was prepared to let the military have all the facilities that it may require; but the control would vest in the national government. Ordinance rule would yield place to normal administration by the national government. The Viceroy would be like the king of England guided by responsible ministers. Popular government would be restored in the provinces and both the central and provincial governments would be responsible to the people. The Viceroy and Commander-in-Chief would have complete control over military operations, subject to advice and criticism by the national government, which would contain defence portfolio. He was also prepared to allow the Allied forces to operate on the Indian soil to defeat the Japanese, but the expenses would not be

borne by India. A few days later Gandhiji repeated this offer to the Viceroy in his letter of 27 July. He definitely stated, "I am prepared to advise the Working Committee to declare that, in view of the changed conditions, mass civil disobedience envisaged by the resolution of August 1942, cannot be offered and that full cooperation in the war effort should be given by the Congress, if a declaration of immediate Indian independence is made and a national government responsible to the Central Assembly be formed subject to the proviso that during the pendency of war, the military operations should continue as at present but without involving any financial burden on India". On his side this was to be the basis of settlement. In consonance with the honour of India, no more concession could have been possible; but the British Government were not then prepared to relinquish power and come to an understanding with the Congress. Wavell's reply and Amery's statement in the House of Commons almost summarily rejected Gandhiji's overtures.

Wavell's rejoinder is characteristic of the British attitude at the time and their raising the phantom of communal dissension. He rejected Gandhiji's proposal as "quite unacceptable to His Majesty's Government as a basis for discussion" and he reiterated the reasons which had prompted refusal of Congress proposals in 1942. He wrote that "(a) their offer of unqualified freedom after the cessation of hostilities was made conditional upon the framing of a constitution agreed by the main elements of India's national life and the negotiation of the necessary treaty arrangements with His Majesty's Government; (b) that it is impossible during the period of hostilities to bring about any change in the constitution, by which means alone a national government could be made responsible to the Central Assembly. The object of these conditions was to ensure the fulfilment of their duty to safeguard the interests of the radical and religious minorities and of the Depressed Classes and their treaty obligations to the Indian states". An interim government could operate only within the framework of the Viceregal responsibility for the entire field of administration. Hence unless "the leaders of the Hindus, Muslims and other important minorities were willing to cooperate in a transitional government established and working within the present constitution", no progress would be possible, and for such cooperation agree-



ment between such leaders was necessary "as to the method by which the new constitution should be framed." This reply of the Viceroy denoted the attitude of the British Government to do nothing unless the minorities agreed and that was an invitation for exhibition of their intransigence. In the middle of 1944, thus, there was little prospect of an early resolution of the constitutional crisis without the previous satisfaction of Jinnah's insatiable demand for a separate sovereign state carved out of Indian territories. For the moment therefore the scene shifted to the solution of communal tangle.

Rajgopalachari since 1942 had been an ardent supporter of some form of partition of the country as the only means to make progress in the constitutional field. During the time of Gandhiji's fast, he had shown him a formula to serve as a basis of settlement between the Congress and the Muslim League for which he had obtained Gandhiji's approval. In April 1944, Rajaji had some discussions and correspondence with Jinnah on the formula, and that was published on 10 July. Its essential basis was the endorsement of the demand for independence by the Muslim League, and cooperation with the Congress in the formation of the transitional government. Also after the end of hostilities a commission would be appointed to "demarcate those contiguous districts in north-west and north-east wherein the Muslims were in an absolute majority", and in these areas a plebiscite of all the inhabitants would be held and if the majority decided in favour of forming a separate sovereign state, it would be given effect to. In the event of separation there would be mutual agreement between the states for defence, commerce, communications and other essential purposes. Transfer of population would be on a voluntary basis. These terms were to be binding only when full power and responsibility for the Government of India was transferred by the British Government. Jinnah did not commit himself but as usual agreed to place it before the League. A week later, Gandhiji showed his willingness to meet Jinnah and suggested a meeting between the two. The latter decided to meet him at his house in Bombay where the talks began on 9 September and continued without any success till 27 September, when the correspondence accompanying the talks was released. This gesture of Gandhiji met with vehement opposition from the Hindu Mahasabha and similar

organisations. There was little scope for compromise also as there was vital difference in the viewpoint of the two parties. Gandhiji's offer of 24 September amounted to acceptance of the claim of separation on the assumption, firstly, that India was not to be regarded as two or more nations but as one family consisting of many members, including Muslims of certain provinces who desired to live in separation from the rest of India. These areas would be demarcated by a commission and wishes of the population determined by a plebiscite. On a vote favouring separation those areas would form a separate state, but there would be treaty providing for efficient and satisfactory administration of foreign affairs, defence, internal communications, customs, commerce, etc. which must continue to be matters of common interest between the two. Also there would be a treaty safeguarding interests of minorities in the two states. While Rajaji and Gandhiji envisaged a common link between the two states in matters like defence, external affairs, commerce and communications, Jinnah did not comprehend creation of a common central authority or government in matters which were the life-blood of a state. Moreover he wanted partition first and independence afterwards. His statement that "Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Rajgopalachari are putting the cart before the horse when they say that all these clauses can have any value or can become effective only if British transfer power to India", betrays his suspicion of the practicability of his pet scheme. Gandhiji believed that his formula met the substance of League demand. However, insistence of Jinnah that Hindus and Muslims were two nations with glaring differences between their culture, social norms, traditions and even economic and political interests, wrecked the prospects of agreement. Gandhiji could never accept this two nation theory which was historically untrue and whose implications would make the two communities hostile in each village and township throughout India. While Muslim majority areas in the north-west and east might be accorded a separate political existence, even to the limit of secession, "it was impossible to agree that the Muslims outside these two regions and living in the midst of large non-Muslim majorities, could claim a nationality different from that of people amongst whom their lot was cast". Gandhiji was prepared to accept the right of self-determination and

secession of the two territorial blocks from India but not an atomisation of entire India and a perpetual state of civil war. Jinnah's insistence on the two nation theory, and his acceptance of Gandhiji as leader of the Hindus only made fruitful conversation impossible. Another vital difference was Jinnah's insistence that the whole of six provinces be transformed into Pakistan, with vast Hindus populations. This demand was contrary to the wording of the Pakistan resolution, but Jinnah had been augmenting his demands at every stage. Another point of disagreement related to plebiscite. While Gandhiji agreed to a plebiscite by the entire population in these areas, Jinnah wanted only Muslims to vote. Furthermore Jinnah wanted no link between the two states which was the basis of Rajgopalachari formula envisaging the formation of joint boards to control matters like defence, foreign relations, communications, etc. These vital differences, one seeking a completely sovereign state wholly separated from the rest of India and the other contemplating local autonomy to the widest extent without annihilating unity of the country and indivisibility of the nation, made compromise impossible, though it is mentioned that at one stage the two leaders had come very much nearer to agreement. Jinnah had full appreciation of the value of his intransigence during the period of war as it suited the British and merited their support. He was not averse to the continuance of Britain's "predominant responsibility for defence" for long in the transitional period which might be of indefinite duration. The failure of these talks, which was a foregone conclusion, raised Jinnah's stature among the Muslims, as waverers began to flock to his standard, also his worth with the British. Dr. Tara Chand rightly holds the view that "Gandhiji's failure provided the necessary grist to the mill of Jinnah's popularity and importance."

The failure of Gandhi-Jinnah talks brought about a temporary gloom in political circles. But that did not lead to cessation of activities to break the communal deadlock. It was clear since the withdrawal of Cripps proposals that a communal settlement was basic to the solution of constitutional crisis. Lack of agreement between the Congress and the League had suited British interests in a period when their primary occupation was the conduct of war; but by about the end of 1944, Italy had

been practically knocked out, German defeat was in sight and the Japanese offensive had been rolled back. The end of war yielding victory to the United Nations was just at the corner, new problems of rehabilitation were to be faced. The British Empire had been depleted of resources to meet the new demands and its maintenance as such was an impossible task. His Majesty's Government had committed itself to the grant of independence to India on the conclusion of the war, and international opinion could not be defied long. Hence Wavell was keen to adopt initiative to solve the Indian problem. At the Governor's Conference there was unanimity of opinion that "failing agreement between the Indian parties, a positive move was essential" which should be made soon. Fortified with this support, the Viceroy desired to assemble a small conference of the main leaders of the parties with whom he would discuss the composition of a transitional government, comprising an equal number of Hindus and Muslims together with a representative each of the Sikhs and Depressed Classes, in addition to the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief. This transitional government composed mainly of Indians was to carry on the war against Japan as well as undertake administration of India until the constitution came into force. One of its tasks was also to consider the composition of the Constituent Assembly and negotiate treaty with His Majesty's Government and obtain approval of leaders of principal communities to such composition. Restoration of popular government in Section 93 provinces, preferably with coalition ministries, was also to be discussed by the Conference. Wavell was in correspondence with Amery in which alternative plans were discussed. The Secretary of State at one stage held the view that instead of making Indian agreement, which had been insisted upon so far, as a prior condition for full self-government, the British Government should "concede independence in the fullest sense as a pre-requisite to an internal settlement in India." This implied the independence of the Government of India as it existed and the Parliament would relinquish power to legislate for Indian affairs. Wavell wanted a declaration by the Prime Minister of the definite intention to give self-government to India, pay the debt to India and make a gift of shipping against sterling balances, higher status to Indian High Commissioner and some other concessions which would give the appearance

of India enjoying status of equality with the Dominions. He wanted to visit England to lay all these proposals before the Cabinet and chalk out the lines of future action. This visit came about at the end of March and terminated early in June and led to the adoption of the new approach by the Viceroy which culminated in the abortive Simla Conference in June 1945. Meanwhile the All Parties Conference under Sapru appointed a Committee to determine principles on which future constitution might be framed and settlement between communities be possible. But this proved to be a futile exercise in the absence of any response from Jinnah and the Committee's rejection of the Pakistan idea. Curiously enough in much of the thinking at the time the idea of parity between Hindus and Muslims in the executive and even legislative bodies of the future was put forth, which was adopted by Wavell also in his plan to resolve the communal tangle. At the end of December 1944, the Viceroy had appealed for faith in the "good intentions of the British people and in their genuine desire for a settlement and for the welfare and self-government of the Indian people." He did not believe that communal problem was insoluble.

Meanwhile, in the Central Assembly the Congress and League members had been cooperating to defeat the government and this led to a pact between their leaders Bhulabhai Desai and Liaqut Ali Khan. It had the approval of Gandhiji though Jinnah did not give countenance to it. The pact related to the formation of an interim government jointly by Desai and Jinnah, who would submit names to the Governor-General after consulting the groups in the Assembly, though it would not be confined to the members of the legislature. Desai was prepared to agree to equality between the League and the Congress among the members of the government with 20 per cent of seats being reserved for the other communities or parties. The interim government would work under the existing constitution, with all members except the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief being Indians. Future set-up would come in due course. In the provinces coalition ministries were suggested. This was a temporary scheme to facilitate creation of a central government with political backing, and Desai had full confidence that "Jinnah was aware and had approved of

what passed between him and Liaquat Ali Khan." The Viceroy commended the scheme to the Secretary of State, but the Cabinet raised various queries which indicated its hesitation to allow any progress in this direction. It wanted Wavell to meet Jinnah and find out his reactions. Jinnah told the Governor of Bombay that he had no knowledge of these conversations and they did not have his or League's authority. However he was prepared to talk to Wavell about this matter on his next visit to Delhi, but that did not materialise. Thus a plan which had some prospect of cooperation between the two warring groups and to break the political deadlock had proved abortive. Meanwhile the League position in the Muslim majority provinces was not strong. Wavell went to London for discussions with the Cabinet on the Indian problem, where ultimately it was decided to call a conference to which leaders of the Congress and League as well as of other parties would be invited. Congress members were to be released from the prisons and a draft statement to be made by the Viceroy was agreed upon. At this time on 7 May 1945, Germany surrendered and the European war came to an end. Japan was not likely to survive long in the field. This made for urgency of settling the Indian problem. The statement was made by the Secretary of State in the Parliament and by the Viceroy in India on June 14, 1945, simultaneously. It contained the proposals which were intended to ease the political problem and lead to future advance.

His Majesty's Government announced that the framing of the future constitution was a task for the Indians themselves, though they were prepared to assist them in working out a new constitutional settlement. The Secretary of State declared that the Cripps offer of March 1942 stood in its entirety without change or qualification, and called upon the political leaders in India to come to an agreement on the procedure where by India's permanent future form of government might be determined. He offered help to break the political deadlock, continuance of which hampered not only political but social and economic progress. Future agricultural and industrial development was possible only with the whole-hearted cooperation of all sections of the Indian people. For the interim period, and to prosecute the war against Japan,

proposal was made for the reconstitution of the Executive Council of the Viceroy from amongst the leaders of Indian political life as also in the provinces "in proportions which would give a balanced representation of the main communities, including equal proportions of Muslims and caste Hindus". All the members of the Council except the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief would be Indians who will also hold portfolios of finance, home and external affairs which had been so far reserved for European members only. To assist the Viceroy in choosing his colleagues, a conference was to be called of leading Indian politicians, heads of important parties, Prime Ministers of provinces, both existing as well as those who had headed the provinces then under Section 93, and some of special experience and authority. They were to recommend a list of names from among whom the Viceroy would choose. Cooperation at the Centre would lead to restoration of popular government in the provinces also. The Viceroy explained these provisions and named the members of the Conference and hoped for the success of the experiment. Consequently the Simla Conference was held on 25 June with 21 invitees, which had an equal number of Hindus and Muslims apart from Europeans, Sikhs and Scheduled Castes. The Prime Ministers of all the provinces, leaders of political parties in the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State, Presidents of the Congress and Muslim League, and Master Tara Singh to represent the Sikhs and N. Sivaraj of the Scheduled Castes met together in Simla. Gandhiji was also invited, but he did not attend the Conference though he was in Simla to be available for advice. The Congress Working Committee accepted the invitation to the Conference and also agreed to parity between Hindus and Muslims as a temporary measure. The Muslim League insisted that all Muslim members of the Executive Council must be those chosen by the Muslim League and did not agree to submit a panel of names for final selection by the Viceroy.

At the Simla Conference, Congress President Azad emphasised the national character of the Congress and refused to be party to any arrangement which prejudiced its national character or reduced it to the level of a communal body, which was the aim of Jinnah. Azad also raised the problem of

the people of Indian states, and reiterated the Congress goal of complete independence. Jinnah, on his side, reaffirmed the goal of Pakistan and asserted that no constitution on any other basis would be acceptable to the Muslim League. In the course of discussions while parity between Muslims and caste Hindus in the matter of seats was not contested, the point of dispute was who those Muslims were to be. Pant and Jinnah failed to agree and, on 29 June, the Conference was adjourned to 14 July, to enable the various groups to submit lists of names to the Viceroy. The Congress and other parties submitted their lists on 7 July. The Congress list included representatives of all major parties, including Jinnah and two other League members, besides two other Muslims, Azad and Asaf Ali of the Congress, as a matter of principle to demonstrate that it was a national organisation. This was bound to rouse Jinnah's opposition, but more sinister in his eyes was the claim of Khizr Hayat Khan, the Unionist Premier of Panjab, who wanted a seat to be allotted to his province. Jinnah refused to submit a list unless he had the assurance that all the Muslim members would belong to the Muslim League. Thus on 14 July when the Conference reassembled, Wavell announced its breakdown on the ground of the refusal of the Muslim League to participate in the Executive Council. This decision was taken with satisfaction by Charchill-Amery combination which did not want the proposals to be proceeded with. They were not prepared even at this late date, when the very existence of their Conservative government was in doubt, to hasten Indian independence, to prevent which they took recourse to the intransigence of Jinnah, which they themselves had spared no pains to encourage. The failure of Wavell plan gave a fresh spurt to the importance of Jinnah which at that moment was at a low ebb in the Muslim majority provinces, in none of which the Muslim League was in a position to form the government. With the failure of the Simla Conference, it was clear to the Muslims all over India that the Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah alone mattered, and in the coming months the prestige and the strength of the Muslim League mounted fast. His attitude at the Conference was determined by his being set on the Pakistan goal and all attempts even temporary to have a unified government for the entire country were mere distractions, snares and



attempts "to break the solidarity of the community". Wavell had been let down by his masters in Whitehall, and the Congress President's estimate that because of the war situation, the "British would have no special reason to seek our cooperation" and therefore it would not be "advisable for us to reject Lord Wavell's offer", was "overdrawn" and unrealistic. Dr. Tara Chand's conclusion has considerable weight. He wrote, "In accepting Wavell's offer the leaders of the Congress seemed to show that they were tired of the struggle and were anxious to arrive at a settlement on the terms proposed. Jinnah, on the other hand, was confident and aggressive. Even before the Conference he was sure of the Muslim electorates' support and was eagerly looking forward to fresh elections". In this attitude he was being backed by some members of the Government who had possibly the confidence of Amery and the Conservatives. According to Menon, the Simla Conference was the last opportunity for "the forces of nationalism to fight a rear-guard action to preserve the integrity of the country, and when the battle was lost the waves of communalism quickly engulfed it".

General election came in Great Britain in July 1945, and brought the Labour Party in overwhelming strength to the House of Commons. Churchill had to give up power, and Atlee became the new Prime Minister with Lord Pethick Lawrence as the Secretary of State for India and Sir Stafford Cripps and other pro-India leaders in the Cabinet. Soon Japan was knocked out of the war and sued for peace on 15 August. There was a growing demand for general elections in India, both at the Centre and the provinces. This suited Jinnah, and the Congress was also not averse to it if the Congressmen were freed and civil liberty was granted. Cripps and the Labour Government also favoured elections to enable them to achieve a permanent solution of the Indian political deadlock. On 21 August, elections were announced to be held in the cold weather, and Wavell decided to visit London for consultations with the new His Majesty's Government. During his London stay, many suggestions were discussed for associating popular representatives with administration, procedure for making the future constitution, etc. It was finally decided that details be settled after knowing the views of Indian leaders

after the elections. Wevell returned on 16 September and on 19th made an announcement on behalf of His Majesty's Government out-lining their policy regarding ministerial responsibility in the provinces, formation of an Executive Council at the Centre and the future trend of constitutional advance.

This announcement expressed the determination of His Majesty's Government "to promote in conjunction with the leaders of Indian opinion the early realisation of full self-government in India." Elections were announced and hope was expressed that "ministerial responsibility will be accepted by political leaders in all provinces." Next, intention was declared "to convene as soon as possible a constitution-making body", and as a preliminary to that after the elections to discuss "with the representatives of the Legislative Assemblies in the provinces, to ascertain whether the proposals contained in the 1942 declaration (Cripps proposals) are acceptable or whether some alternative and modified scheme is preferable". Also discussions would be held with the "representatives of the Indian States with a view to ascertaining in what way they can best take their part in the constitution-making body". Also the British Government would consider the content of the treaty to be concluded between Britain and India. As an interim measure for dealing with the urgent economic and social problems and for taking full part in working out the new World Order, the Executive Council would be reformed, having the full support of the main Indian parties, after the elections. The Viceroy stressed the importance which the new Labour Government attached to the Indian problem and their resolve to overcome the obstacles in solving it. Atlee also, in his message, broadcast on the same day, appealed to the "Indians to make united effort to evolve a constitution which would be accepted as fair by all parties and interests in India". He also assured that there would be nothing in the treaty which might be incompatible in any manner with the interests of India. Thus early realisation of full self-government in India was assured. The reaction of the two main political parties, the Congress and the Muslim League, was adverse but both agreed to contest the forthcoming elections. The All-India Congress Committee resolution termed Wavell's proposals as "vague and inadequate and

unsatisfactory", criticised the limited franchise and gross imperfection of the electoral rolls, and demanded release of all political prisoners, lifting of the ban on Congress Socialist party, Forward Bloc and Kisan organisations. It also expressed its determination to contest the elections "to demonstrate the will of the people on the issue of the immediate transfer of power", and asked the people for their full response and support. Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan, on behalf of the Muslim League, reiterated the view that no solution would be acceptable except on the basis of Pakistan. However the attention now shifted to the elections, but before they materialised the trial of Indian National Army personnel created a sensation and brought about a convulsion in the political life of the country.

During the war after the capture of Singapore by the Japanese, the Indian, Australian and British forces surrendered in February 1942 and they were made prisoners of war in large numbers. With the active collaboration of Japanese officers, Mohan Singh and some of his associates formed the nucleus of the Indian National Army, with the object of waging war against the British for the independence of India and carrying on intense propaganda against foreign rule. This first attempt failed to materialise in any concrete results and Mohan Singh lost his freedom. Meanwhile Subhas Chandra Bose had reached Germany, after slipping away from his house arrest and moving across northern India and Afghanistan incognito, and made active attempts to secure Axis support for India's freedom. Not meeting with much success in Germany, he moved to Japan where he obtained assurance of active help, and coming to Singapore re-organised the Indian National Army, established a provisional government of free India, received donations from Indians settled in South-east Asia and raised some divisions to participate in an invasion of India. Their most spectacular achievement was the siege of Kohima; but at a time when Japanese fortunes were facing an ebb, Bose's Indian National Army (INA) could not make much headway and was forced to surrender to the British-Indian armed forces. About 20,000 men and officers became war prisoners and were brought into India. The military authorities unwisely decided to try them for waging war against the king and for alleged atrocities committed in raising the Indian National Army.

Three officers, one Hindu, one Sikh and one Muslim, were tried by a Court Martial in the Red Fort of Delhi as a token of British intentions not to countenance sedition among the armed forces. The Congress and other parties decided to defend the accused and some most eminent legal luminaries like Bhulabhai Desai, Sir Tej Bahadur Supra and even Jawaharlal Nehru undertook their defence. This "evoked popular enthusiasm throughout the land" and demonstrations were held all over the country. The agitation became countrywide and all political parties lent their co-operation. The Government of India had no alternative but to submit to the storm and, though the accused were convicted, their sentences were remitted in almost all the cases. The Congress leaders utilised this occasion to denounce the British and applauded Bose and his army for their valourous deeds. People were roused against the British and they rallied round the Congress flag. Even men of the armed forces did not hesitate to express their loyalty to the Congress. The depression consequent on the brutal suppression of 1942 revolt was soon dissipated and a new wave of enthusiasm was evident. It also became clear that the people were in no mood to adhere merely to the method of non-violence, and that if no immediate solution of the constitutional tangle was in sight, armed revolt and wide spread violence might be employed to wrest freedom from unwilling hands. The mutiny of naval ratings in Bombay on 18 February 1946 in protest against "untold hardships regarding pay and food and the most outrageous racial discrimination", particularly the derogatory references to their national character by their commander created sensation and might have ended in considerable bloodshed but for the intervention of Vallabhabhai Patel, who persuaded them to surrender. In sympathy with the naval personnel, strikes and hartals were organised in Bombay which led to looting and burning of shops, banks, post offices police posts and government grain shops. More than 200 persons were killed by police firing. Their repercussion was felt in other port towns of Calcutta, Madras and Karachi. The army and the air force was also affected, and police revolt in Jabalpur made evident that the foreign rulers could not rely on the loyalty and devotion of armed forces or even police in holding long to India. These events along with the substantial

depression in the international status of Great Britain, as well as deterioration in economy, growing unemployment made the task of His Majesty's Government tremendously difficult to maintain its imperial sway. The new Labour Government was conscious of the situation and decided to transfer power to Indian hands as early as practicable.

Elections to the legislature gripped popular attention at the close of 1945 and opening of 1946. The Congress Working Committee drew up the election manifesto in its meeting of 7 December. It defined the goal of India as "a free democratic republic with fundamental rights and liberties of all citizens guaranteed". A federal constitution was to be established with autonomy to the constituent units, and the legislatures to be elected on the basis of adult suffrage. The federation was to be a willing union of parts to exercise only a minimum of subjects of common and essential interest, but provision was to be made for additional subjects which might be entrusted by the provinces. While a section in the Congress was prepared to permit the right of secession to the federating units, there was overwhelming opposition to it. All that the Congress was prepared to accept was, as was contained in the Working Committee resolution of September 1945, the "fullest autonomy possible within the union consistently with a strong National State". Also it declared that "it cannot think in terms of compelling the people in any territorial unit to remain in an Indian Union against their declared and established will." This resolution, however, was never presented to the All-India Congress Committee. Demand for independence was the main burden of the election manifesto. The Muslim League fought the elections on the issue of Pakistan and its sole right to represent all the Muslims. Their demand was that the provinces of Panjab, Sind, the North-west Frontier Province, Baluchistan, Bengal and Assam in their entirety should be formed into a separate sovereign state without any common links with the other parts of the country. Thus the elections were fought on the issue of Union on one side and partition as a precondition of independence on the other. Jinnah's position had been considerably strengthened as, according to Menon, "Muslims with any political ambitions had already begun to realise that their interests could be only with Jinnah and the

League.” Among the Hindus, the Congress was the favourite. This was reflected in the results of the general elections. The Congress secured 91.3 per cent of the votes cast in the non-Muslim constituencies while the Muslim League gained 88.6 per cent in the reserved Muslim constituencies in the Central legislature. Out of 102 seats, Congress won 57 and the Muslim League 30. In the provincial elections also, the same tendency was apparent. Out of the total of 1585, of which 846 were general, 426 Muslims and 247 others, the Congress won 923 and the Muslim league 425. The Congress gained absolute majority in Assam, Bihar, Bombay, Central Provinces, Madras, North-west Frontier Province, Orissa, and United Provinces. The Muslim League had gained considerable strength only in Bengal, Panjab and Sind, but in other provinces also it had gained either all or most of the Muslim seats. Thus the claim of Jinnah to represent the Muslims of India was justified, and the Nationalist Muslims cut a sorry figure. Among the Hindus and others, the Congress stood as the pre-eminent party. It formed the government in eight provinces, and in Panjab it was an important constituent of the coalition party government. Only in Sind and Bengal, the Muslim League formed the government, but it had to depend on the support of Europeans and the Governor, who as in the case of Sind called the Muslim League leader to form the ministry even though he did not have the majority behind him. The Congress did not have to depend on the support of the Muslim League for ministry formation and that made for further bitterness between the two. It was clear that constitutional advance depended on the solution of the Pakistan issue, and the immediate problem was “to adjust the relations of the two parts of India, each enjoying full autonomy, and demanding independence”.

On the New Years Day of 1946, the Labour Secretary of State, Lord Pethick Lawrence, broadcast the message that the British people and their government wished “to see India rise quickly to the full and free status of an equal partner in the British Commonwealth”. The reaffirmation of this objective in clear terms was a timely recognition of the importance of early action. He emphasised the need of “a rational and acceptable plan of action.....under which authority can be transferred to Indian control under forms of government

which will be willingly accepted by the broad mass of India's people, so that new India will not be torn and rent by internal strife and dissensions". At the same time Wavell realised that "there was no organised opposition to the Congress among Hindus in British India". The only opposition was by the Muslim League which was a sectional organisation and it was inflexibly attached to the Pakistan demand as long as Jinnah controlled it. The Viceroy also was conscious of the impracticability of depending too long on the support of Indian officials and the army in a conflict with the Congress, and thus unless an early solution was found the British Government would be in an untenable position. Accordingly, he drew up a **threefold** plan to be put into action consecutively. The first ~~related~~ to the formation of an Executive Council with representatives of the principal political parties on a proportional basis to carry on the government of the country during the interim period. The second was to form a constitution-making body to produce a workable constitution, and third to establish provincial governments on a coalition basis as far as possible. He was prepared to go ahead with his plan even if Jinnah refused to participate in the interim government. He however felt that the demand for Pakistan in the genuinely Muslim majority areas would have to be conceded, but large non-Muslim populations could not be compelled to remain in Pakistan against their will. This would involve division of the provinces of Panjab and Bengal, leaving to Jinnah what he termed "the husk", a moth-eaten Pakistan. Wavell fondly hoped that such a plan might dissuade Jinnah from insisting on Pakistan and the League might elect to remain in an all-India federation. The Cabinet did not endorse the view of the Viceroy of proceeding by stages for once the discussions were begun with Indian leaders on the subject of Executive Council, they would extend to the whole field. Hence they decided to depute a committee of the Cabinet, known as Cabinet Mission, to converse with Indian leaders and take decisions without much waste of time involved in communications being made to the Cabinet in London. Accordingly on 19 February 1946, Pethick-Lawrence made an announcement in the House of Lords of the Cabinet decision to send Pethick-Lawrence, Stafford Cripps and Alexander to India to act in association with the Viceroy in giving

effect to the steps earlier announced in September for agreement on the method of framing a constitution, setting up a constitution-making body and forming an interim government as a preliminary to the establishment of full self-government in India, and seeking agreement of Indian leaders on the principles and procedure relating to the constitutional issue. Simultaneously Atlee, the Prime Minister, also made a similar announcement in the House of Commons. In the debate on March 15, in the course of his speech he stressed the point that his colleagues were going to India "to help her to attain that freedom as speedily and fully as possible" and to set up "the machinery for making that decision". He referred to the difficulties created by communal and other differences, but felt that those could be overcome by Indians themselves. In this context he referred to the problem of minorities, that they "should be able to live free from fear", but stated that "we cannot allow a Minority to place a veto on the advance of the Majority". Further he added that "we cannot make Indians responsible for governing themselves, and, at the same time, retain here responsibility for the treatment of Minorities and the power to intervene in their behalf". This was in clear contrast to the principle held forth so far by the previous governments. Also he referred to the demand for a Treaty and stated "That Treaty is primarily for India. We are not going to hang out for own advantage which would be a disadvantage to India". This announcement was welcomed by the Congress and Gandhiji expressed satisfaction with it. But Jinnah was critical of the use of the term minority for the Muslim nation and insisted on Pakistan and division of India. Genuine expectations were there that the Cabinet Mission would break the deadlock and find satisfactory solution. Menon commented that "past distrust gave place to new hope and belief that India was at last on the road to Freedom and Independence". Independence came but not without the shock of partition of the country and the mutual carnage which accompanied it.

The Cabinet Mission arrived in Delhi on 4 March 1946 and spent the first five weeks in gauging the opinion in the country, both official and of the people's leaders. They conferred with the Viceroy, his Executive Council, provincial Governors,



Premiers of provinces, leaders of political parties, the Congress, Muslim League, Liberals, Sikhs, Scheduled Castes and others. They had met Gandhiji. Thus they were in a position to have a clear and definite assessment of the conflicting views and the prospects of settlement. Unlike Cripps Mission, four years earlier, the Cabinet Mission did not come to India with any set plan and was therefore in a position to form their views and put forth a plan based on their estimate of the situation. Lord Pethick Lawrence explained the purpose of his visit when he stated that "the discussions now to begin are preliminary to the setting up of machinery whereby the forms of government under which India can realize her full independent status can be determined by Indians. The objective is to set up an acceptable machinery quickly and to make the necessary interim arrangements." Thus their work was directed to the search for a formula according to which action would be taken to frame the future constitution of India as also to form an interim government to prepare the ground for the assemblage of the Constituent Assembly and carry on the administration of India pending the institution of the new constitutional scheme. In their discussions with Gandhiji, the President of the Congress and that of the Muslim League, the immense gap between the thinking of the various parties was revealed as well as the conviction that the future constitutional set up would depend on satisfactory resolution of the communal tangle. Gandhiji supported Rajgopalachari formula and suggested it as a basis for discussion. He considered Pakistan as untruth and expressed his opposition to the two-nation theory so vehemently propounded by Jinnah. He advocated only one constitution-making body, and during the interim period he proposed that Jinnah should be requested to form the government and on his refusal the Congress should be entrusted with the task. President of the Congress, Azad, laid stress on independence and the constitution to be determined by a Constituent Assembly. The Congress stood for federal government with a limited number of compulsory federal subjects such as defence, communication and foreign affairs, and autonomous provinces with residuary powers vesting in them. A peculiar method of meeting the Pakistan demand was suggested by having a list of optional subjects out of which a provincial government would be free to

surrender to the federation besides the compulsory subjects. In essence the Congress plan was that after the constitution had been devised a province would have three alternatives to select from, namely (1) "to stand out of the Constitution, (2) to enter the Constitution by federating for the compulsory subjects only and (3) to federate for the compulsory as well as for the optional subjects." Azad told the Cabinet Mission that the Congress could never agree to partition though "autonomy with regard to optional subjects could be granted." He suggested provincial legislatures should choose the members of the Constituent Assembly.

Jinnah harped on his tune of India having never been a unity and laid stress on the differences among the communities. This led him to advocate division of India; but he expressed his willingness to consider having common railways, customs, etc. to be governed by treaties and agreements "once the fundamentals of Pakistan were agreed." Jinnah favoured creation of a sovereign Pakistan state having full control of its defence, external affairs, etc. though at the moment he did not rule out some adjustment in regard to certain common matters. There was opposition to partition from the Sikhs, Hindu Mahasabha and others, though some of them were prepared to make most liberal offer to the Muslims. Most of these groups stood for a strong centre having charge of defence as security of the country was primary consideration. The Muslim League, however, vehemently advocated division of the country and, to reinforce this demand, Jinnah managed a stage-show when he held the convention of Muslim League members elected to the various legislatures. These five hundred men adopted a resolution demanding a sovereign and independent state of Pakistan, comprising the provinces of Assam, Bengal, Panjab, Sind, Baluchistan and North-west Frontier Province and setting up of two separate constitution-making bodies. Acceptance of this demand alone would enable the Muslims to participate in the formation of an interim government. They also threatened that any attempt "to impose a constitution or to force on them an interim government contrary to their demand would leave the Muslims no alternative but to resist such imposition by all the means possible for their survival and national existence". The Cabinet Mission placed various plans before the Congress and

the League which were based on a united India as a federation for limited purposes only and a three tier structure. A conference of the representatives of the Congress and League with the Cabinet Mission was also held in Simla, but no agreement was possible. Hence the Cabinet Mission, on 16 May, issued a statement outlining the steps which might be taken to frame the future constitution and provide for the formation of the interim government. In all the discussions held till 12 May, the cleavage between the approach of the Congress and that of the League was so deep that all attempts to bridge it proved abortive.

Initially the statement referred to the intention announced by the Prime Minister in March of helping India "to attain her freedom as speedily and fully as possible" and to set up the machinery for making decision about the form of government to replace the present regime. The statement then mentioned the efforts made by the Cabinet Mission "to assist the two main political parties to reach agreement upon the fundamental issue of the unity or division of India". But they failed to reach a settlement. Hence, with the full approval of His Majesty's Government, they decided to make immediate "arrangement whereby Indians may decide the future constitution of India, and an interim government to carry on the administration of British India until such time as a new constitution can be brought into being." The Mission were impressed by "an almost universal desire outside the supporters of the Muslim League, for the unity of India." But they realised "the very genuine and acute anxiety of the Muslims lest they should find themselves subjected to a perpetual Hindu-majority rule." Hence it was essential for internal peace that the Muslims should be assured of "control in all matters vital to their culture, religion and economic matters." They then referred to the League demand for a separate sovereign state comprising six provinces on the north-western and eastern frontiers of India, and came to the conclusion "that the setting up of a separate sovereign State of Pakistan on the lines claimed by the Muslim League would not solve the communal minority problem nor can we see any justification for including within a sovereign Pakistan those districts of the Panjab and of Bengal and Assam in which the population is predominantly non-

Muslim." The next alternative was to consider a smaller Pakistan by excluding the areas having a majority of non-Muslims such as the Ambala and Jullundur divisions in Panjab, whole of Assam except Sylhet district and a large part of West Bengal including Calcutta. Their conclusion was that "neither a larger nor a smaller sovereign State of Pakistan would provide an acceptable solution of the communal problem." Division of Panjab would affect the Sikhs who would be left on both sides of the border. They also felt that a Pakistan of Jinnah's conception was impracticable on administrative, economic and military considerations. That would disintegrate the entire transportation and communication system, and would affect adversely the defence of the country; and the division of armed forces would hamper their efficiency and inflict a deadly blow on their long traditions. Another consideration which weighed against partition was the difficulty of associating the Indian States with a divided British India. Also the two halves of Pakistan would be physically separated from each other by "some seven hundred miles, and the communications between them would be dependent on the goodwill of Hindustan." Hence they were "unable to advise the British Government that the power which at present resides in British hands should be handed over to two entirely separate states." The Cabinet Mission regarded Congress suggestion of having compulsory and optional federal subjects as impracticable and injurious to effective administration. Also they pointed to the lapse of paramountry over the Indian States and felt that future relationship between the States and the Indian Government would be a matter for negotiations.

With these preliminary remarks, the Cabinet Mission made recommendations regarding the basic form of constitution. These were: (1) There should be a Union of India, comprising both British Indian and the Indian States, which should deal with the subjects of Foreign affairs, Defence and Communications, and should have the power to raise the finances required for the purpose; (2) The Union should have an Executive and a Legislature constituted from British Indian and States representatives. Questions raising a major communal issue in the Legislature would require a majority of the representatives present and voting of each of the two major communities as

well as a majority of all members present and voting. (3) All subjects other than the Union subjects should vest in the provinces and the States would retain all subjects not ceded to the Union. (4) Provinces should be free to form Groups with executives and legislatures, and each group could determine the provincial subjects to be taken in common. (5) The provinces should be free to call for a reconsideration of the terms of the constitution after an initial period of ten years and at ten yearly intervals thereafter. The Mission justified this course on the ground that without some such step there was no hope of "getting the two major communities to join in the setting up of the constitution-making machinery".

The Statement then indicated the character of the constitution-making machinery which they proposed to set up. They desired to have "as broad-based and accurate a representation of the whole population as is possible", which implied adult suffrage. But as that course would involve inordinate delay, they decided, as an alternative, to utilise the recently elected provincial Legislative Assemblies as electing bodies. As these legislatures did not reflect fairly the size of the population of the province, they decided (1) to allot to each province a total number of seats proportional to its population, roughly in the ratio of one to a million, (2) to divide this allocation of seats between the main communities in each province in proportion to their population, and (3) to provide that the representation allotted to each community should be elected by the members of that community in the Legislative Assembly by the method of proportional representation. For this purpose only three categories were recognised, General, Muslims and Sikhs. The first included Hindus and all others except Muslims and Sikhs. On this basis, the total of members for British India came to 293 to which 93 were to be added representing the Indian States. The Constituent Assembly thus was to comprise 385 members in total. An ingenious method was devised for the transaction of business by this Assembly. In accordance with the three tier system which had been suggested earlier and which had gripped the imagination of the Cabinet Mission, as the best mode of reconciling the League demand and the objective of unity of India, the Statement divided the provinces into three Sections. A included the Hindu majority provinces of

Madras, Bombay, United Provinces, Bihar, Central Provinces and Orissa, B had Panjab, Sind and North-West Frontier Province, while C was to be formed of Bengal and Assam. The Chief Commissioner provinces of Delhi, Ajmer-Mewara and Coorg were to join section A while Baluchistan was to form part of Section B. This classification of provinces was to be rigid, and when the Congress objected to Assam or North-west Frontier Province being forced into their respective sections and demanded freedom of choice in the beginning, His Majesty's Government ruled out option at that stage.

The Mission then determined the procedure of the functioning of the Assembly. It was laid down that all the representatives chosen would meet in New Delhi, have a preliminary meeting to decide the general order of business, elect a Chairman other officers and an Advisory Committee on the rights of citizens, minorities and tribal and excluded areas. Then the provincial representatives would divide up into three sections as given above under A, B & C. These sections would then settle the provincial constitution for the provinces in each section and also decide whether any Group Constitution should be set up for these provinces and if so what provincial subjects should be dealt with by the Group. However there was provision made for a province to opt out of the Group when the new constitutional arrangements came into operation and subsequent to the vote of the new provincial legislature when the general election had been held. When the provincial and Group constitution had been decided upon, the representatives in the three Sections and those of the Indian States would reassemble for the purpose of settling the Union Constitution. At this stage any resolution raising any major communal issue would require a majority of the representatives present and voting of each of the two major communities. The Chairman was to decide which resolutions raised major communal issues and could consult the Federal Court if requested by a majority of the representatives of the two major communities. By this means the Cabinet Mission wanted to satisfy the League demand, which however remained unquenched, as Jinnah would accept little short of two separate constitution-making bodies and a separate Pakistan state. Provision was also made for a treaty to be negotiated between the Union Constituent Assembly and the United Kingdom "to

provide for certain matters arising out of the transfer of power”.

The third part of the statement related to the formation of an interim government having support of major political parties immediately to carry on the administration of India. The Mission hoped for maximum cooperation and popular support for the government which would be faced with the difficult tasks, such as heavy day to day administration, dealing with the grave danger of famine, postwar development and participation in international conferences. In the government all the portfolios would be held by Indians having the full confidence of the people, except that the British Viceroy would be there at its head. In conclusion the Cabinet Mission appealed for a spirit of mutual accommodation and goodwill in settling their future constitution. They felt that agreement between Indian parties by themselves was not attainable, and therefore hoped that the proposals then placed “will be accepted and operated by you in the spirit of accommodation and goodwill in which they are offered”. “The alternative would be grave danger of violence, chaos, and even civil war. The result and duration of such a disturbance cannot be foreseen; but it is certain that it would be a terrible disaster for many millions of men, women and children. This is a possibility which must be regarded with equal abhorrence by the Indian people, our own countrymen and the world as a whole”. In the end the Mission expressed the “hope that independent India may choose to be a member of the British Commonwealth”, and that in any event the Indian people “will remain in close and friendly association with our people”. By this statement outlining the plan for making the future constitution, the British Government finally decided to quit India and leave her an independent state. There was no doubt that at this stage they were sincerely keen to leave an integrated and united India, irrespective of the demand for a separate sovereign state of Pakistan by Jinnah. The ingenuous method proposed for constitution-making was the last attempt to accommodate the conflicting ideologies of unity and division.

The plan as outlined in the statement of 16 May did not satisfy either the Congress or the League. The Sikhs were wholly opposed to the division of India and the plan of group-

ing of the provinces and a weak centre. Gandhiji and the Congress did not relish the idea of compulsion in respect of the allocation of provinces to the different sections and were opposed to the inclusion of North-west Frontier Province in Section B and Assam in Section C. Gandhiji presumed that the Constituent Assembly would be a sovereign body, free to reject or modify the proposals contained in the Mission scheme. The Congress Working Committee stressed the demand for independence and desired that the interim government should be free of control by the Viceroy. There was opposition to the right of Europeans to get elected to the Assembly, maintenance of British troops in India and the mode of representation of the peoples of the States in the Constituent Assembly. The Congress was also opposed to the idea of parity of Hindus and Muslims in the interim government as also to the provision that decision in regard to communal questions would be governed by a special procedure. In its resolution of 26 June 1946, the Congress Working Committee clearly declared its reaction to the Cabinet Mission proposals of 16 May and 16 June. They felt that the proposals fell short of the Congress objective of "immediate independence and the opening out of the avenues leading to the rapid advance of the masses, economically and socially". Their idea of independence was the "establishment of a united, democratic Indian federation, with a Central authority, which would command respect from the nations of the world, maximum provincial autonomy and equal rights for all men and women in the country". The grouping system weakened the whole structure and was unfair to the provinces of North-west Frontier Province and Assam and to the Sikhs and some other minorities. Regarding the proposals contained in June 16 statement, which gave a list of members selected for the interim government, the resolution demanded that this provisional government "should function in fact, if not in law, as a defacto independent government leading to the full independence to come. The members of such a government can only hold themselves responsible to the people and not to any external authority". It also insisted on the national character of the Congress, hence opposed parity between Hindus and Muslims. The 16 June resolution of the Mission had named the members of the interim government, of whom six including



a scheduled caste representative belonged to the Congress five to the Muslim League, one each to Sikhs, Indian Christians and Parsis.

Gandiji had welcomed the 16 May statement, but he had some grave misgivings. Criticising the division into three sections, he opined "the voluntary character of the statement demands that the liberty of the individual unit should be unimpaired. Any member of the sections is free to join it. The freedom to opt out is an additional safeguard." In his article on 2 June in the Harijan, he emphasised that "the formation of a popular government at the centre should have preceded the issue of the statement." As regards paramountcy he wrote it could not be ended with the establishment of the interim government but must be exercised in cooperation with it. Also that British troops should not remain after the formation of the interim government as their presence was incompatible with independence. He had also opposed the right given to the Europeans to be elected to the Constituent Assembly, and they chose not to seek election; but this forbearance on their part did not please the Muslim League. The Princes accepted the proposals of 16 May and elected a Negotiating Committee to settle the method of their representation to the Constituent Assembly, as well as to arrange matters of common concern to British India and the states. The Muslim League expressed its dissatisfaction with the scheme and regretted that their demand for Pakistan had not been accepted, but instead one Union of India with an executive and legislature was prescribed. The League also objected to the omission of provision for parity in the Central executive and legislature as also to the authority given to the Chairman of the Constituent Assembly to decide on communal issues. However, the Mission tried to meet the objections of the Congress and League, and gave assurance of not interfering with the discretion of the Assembly, and made it clear that the constitution framed by it would be recommended to the Parliament for such action as might be necessary for the transfer of power to India. At the same time Wavell, to meet Jinnah's objection, gave him assurance that "we do not propose to make any discrimination in the treatment of either party and that we shall go ahead with the plan laid down in the statement so far as circumstances permit if

either party accepts but we hope that both will accept." The 16 May Statement, however, was accepted by the League though not without some reservations. Similarly the 16 June statement also led to various objections by Jinnah, which were answered by the Viceroy, in the course of which he assured the League that "no decision on a major communal issue could be taken by the Interim Government if the majority of either of the parties was opposed to it." But Wavell made it clear that he could not accept the view that all Muslim members must be chosen by the Muslim League. The Congress was kept informed of all these developments.

Ultimately the Congress took its final decision which was conveyed by President Azad to the Viceroy on 26 June and expressed in the Working Committee resolution of that date. After enumerating its objections to the scheme and the composition of the interim government, it felt that the proposals fell short of its objectives. Yet the Committee considered them earnestly in all their aspects because of their desire to find some way for the peaceful settlement of India's problem and the ending of the conflict between India and England. Therefore they "decided that the Congress would join the proposed Constituent Assembly, with a view to framing the constitution of a free, united and democratic India." But the Working Committee did not view the 16 June statement relating to the formation of the Interim Government with the same toleration, as there were "defects related to matters of vital concern to the Congress." It emphasised its national character and therefore was unable to "accept an artificial and unjust parity of agree to the veto of a communal group." Hence the Committee were unable to accept these proposals about the Interim Indian Government. But they expressed the view that it was essential that "a representative and responsible provisional National Government be formed at the earliest possible date" to facilitate the working of the Constituent Assembly in "a free environment." Thus on 26 June 1946 when the Cabinet Mission decided to terminate their stay in India, the position was that the Congress had accepted the long term proposals but rejected those relating to the Interim Government. The League had with numerous reservations and queries accepted the proposals for the Constituent Assembly and the Interim Government, 10b

the latter particularly because of their rejection by the Congress, in the belief that the League would be called upon exclusively to form the provisional government, which Jinnah fondly hoped was the situation in view of the assurance given rather inadvertently by Wavell "that we shall go ahead with the plan laid down in the statement so far as circumstances permit if either party accepts". As such when the Cabinet Mission decided to drop the formation of the interim government and instead to set up a temporary Caretaker Government of officials, Jinnah was greatly offended and charged the Viceroy of breach of faith. The mission left India on 29 June, after issuing instructions for early election to the Constituent Assembly. They also hoped that the two parties would come to some accommodation upon the composition of the Interim Government. The situation, as Pethic Lawrence pointed out was "confused and complicated" and the communal passions were rising.

Events moved with a certain rapidity in the next few months and clearly demonstrated that the country was gripped by a wave of violence and was drifting towards the creation of Pakistan. The British intention to have united India, capable of defending the frontiers against external aggression and strong enough to build up economy of the country and improve the condition of the people, was stoutly combated by the separationist attitude of the Muslim League, whose president Jinnah harped only on one theme of a separate sovereign Pakistan. He was prepared to gain this end by any means, constitutional or otherwise, peaceful or violent. Congress hesitancy about accepting the Cabinet Mission plan without reservation and speeches of some of its leaders further stiffened Jinnah's intransigence. The All India Congress Committee accepted the 16 May statement at its meeting on 6 July despite strong opposition by the Socialist Party. Nehru was elected the new President of the Congress, and in his speeches he gave expression to the views which created doubts about the sincerity of the Congress in adhering to the plan. He said their agreement was merely to enter the Constituent Assembly and nothing more than that, and that they would remain there only as long as they thought it was for the good of India. Most categorically he affirmed "We are not bound by

a single thing except that we have decided for the moment to go to the Constituent Assembly". He refused to be guided by the two provisos laid down by the Mission, namely arrangements for minorities and treaty with the British Government. He questioned the validity of the grouping system which "does not get us on at all". He was also not prepared to limit the powers of the Centre to the minimum of subjects and suggested their expansion. This speech was presumed by Jinnah to be "a complete repudiation of the basic form upon which the long-term scheme rests and all its fundamentals and terms and obligations and rights of parties accepting the scheme." He asked His Majesty's Government to declare that the Congress had not accepted the scheme. The Secretary of State and Stafford Cripps in their speeches in Parliament reaffirmed the purpose of the Constituent Assembly and the absolute necessity to abide by the procedure laid down in the Statement of 16 May, and the parties entering the Assembly could not go outside the terms of what had been agreed. They emphasised that meeting in sections and deliberating on the desirability of forming a Group and the nature and extent of its powers were inherent in the plan, and the provinces could opt out of the group only after the Constitution had been framed and first election held under it. This was a repudiation of the views expressed by Nehru, but failed to soften the belligerence of the Muslim League. Jinnah accused the Cabinet Mission of bad faith, condemned the Congress of "pettifogging and higgling attitude" and declared adherence to the goal of Pakistan as their interests would not be safe in the Constituent Assembly. He asked that the 16 May statement should be revoked. By another resolution passed on 27 July, the League Working Committee drew up a plan of direct action and fixed 16 August as the day for its enforcement. Jinnah declared, "this day we bid goodbye to constitutional methods.....Today we have also forged a pistol and are in a position to use it". The Congress explanations did not help to reconcile the League and the direct Action Day was observed in all its brutality, leading to massacres, rioting and anarchy in many parts of the country. Calcutta killings were engineered by the League Government there and set into motion the string of communal holocausts in eastern Bengal, Bihar,

Sind and other provinces, which foreshadowed the happenings in Panjab when independence came twelve months later.

Meanwhile Wavell was making efforts to form an interim government which, as he said, in his letter of 22 July to Jinnah and Nehru, would consist of 14 members, six nominated by the Congress including a Scheduled Caste representative, five from the Muslim League and three representatives of minorities nominated by the Viceroy, one of which was to be for a Sikh. No party could object to the names submitted by the other party and distribution of portfolios between the Congress and the League would be on an equitable basis, both sharing the important ones. Also major communal issues would be decided only by the assent of both the parties. Nehru again referred to the independence of action of the interim government and that the Governor-General would act as a constitutional head merely and intimated Congress inability to cooperate in the formation of a government as suggested by the Viceroy. Jinnah objected to the proposal on the ground of lack of the principle of parity, and portfolios not being allocated on the basis of equality and said his Working Committee could not accept the proposal. It was then decided not to humour Jinnah but invite Nehru to form the government, and the Constituent Assembly, for which elections were held at the end of July, should be summoned to meet in the first week of September. Hence on 6 August Nehru was invited to make proposals for the formation of the interim government, which the Congress Working Committee accepted and sought to enlist the cooperation of the Muslim League, by affirming that the Assembly would "naturally function with the internal limitations which are inherent in its task and would further seek the largest cooperation in drawing up the Constitution of Free India, allowing the greatest measure of freedom and protection for all just claims and interests". It sought for the cooperation of the Muslim League. But Jinnah did not accept it.

Nehru was then formally called upon to form the government on 12 August, and he in turn sought a meeting with Jinnah to seek his cooperation. Their meeting however failed to lead to any result. Meanwhile Direct Action Day had ended in disaster in Calcutta and other places, where a large num-

ber of people were killed, wounded and robbed of all their belongings and hopes destroyed. The Interim Government was announced on 24 August and consisted of Nehru, Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Asaf Ali, Rajgopalachari, Sarat Chandra Bose, John Mathai, Baldev Singh, Shaffat Ahmad Khan, Jagjivan Ram, Ali Zaheer and Bhabha. Two more Muslims were to be appointed later. This government was to take office on 2 September. It was open to the Muslim League to join later when the council would be reshuffled, and they had the option to nominate five members, which they did in the last week of October. Their nomination of Liaqat Ali Khan, Nishtar, Ghazanfar Ali, Chundrigar and Jogendra Mandal included a member of the Scheduled Caste to spite the Congress for including a Muslim in its team. The League members demanded one of the three portfolios of Home, Defence and External affairs as well as the position of Vice-President of the Council, then held by Nehru to be occupied by the Congress and League representatives in turn every month. Wavell did not accept this demand but gave finance to Liaqat Ali Khan and Communications, Health, Commerce and Law to the League members. It was clear from the very beginning that the League had not come into the interim government to cooperate but to make its smooth functioning impossible. Jinnah, according to Menon, had made it clear to the Viceroy that the one purpose of the League in coming into the interim government was to prevent the Congress from consolidating its position to the detriment of the League. There was hence no question of their working as a team. They had not desisted from indulging in belligerent speeches or continuing the campaign for direct action. The two wings were both pulling in different directions and when the budget was framed, actual conflict was apparent by the imposition of a high tax on capital which was to fall on the Hindu capitalists on whose support the Congress depended. Nehru threatened resignation; the dispute was however settled by the Viceroy's effort to reduce the incidence of the tax. The Muslim League members actually created two warring camps in the official cadre, thus accentuating the differences in the country. All these developments aggravated communal tension and the country was heading towards civil war, in which the unpartisanship of the armed

forces and the police could not be guaranteed. This state of affairs had led Nehru and Patel to contemplate division of the provinces of Panjab and Bengal and agree to the division of the country as a last resort. Gandhiji's voice that partition would be possible only on his dead body found feeble response, and he had to devote his energies to the healing of the wounds in Bengal and Bihar and bring about harmony in these provinces torn by communal hatred.

The League members had entered the interim government without rescinding the resolution rejecting the Cabinet Mission plan, and Jinnah was in no mood to commit the League to any positive action. He was instead, creating conditions which would compel the British Government and the Congress to accept Pakistan. To Viceroy's demand that League representatives must join the Constituent Assembly, he adopted an evasive attitude, which later developed into one of absolute refusal to participate in the Assembly. Meanwhile invitations were issued on 20 November for the Constituent Assembly to meet on 9 December. Jinnah called it "one more blunder of a very grave and serious character", and asked the representatives of the Muslim League not to participate. Viceroy told Liaquat Ali Khan that unless they joined the Assembly, he could not agree to the League members remaining in the interim government, but failed to convince the latter who insisted on explanation by His Majesty's Government of the clauses relating to procedure in the sections to conform to the League's interpretation. This impelled the Viceroy to press upon the British Cabinet to give an assurance that the sections would reach decisions by a majority vote, contrary to Congress view to the contrary. The Secretary of State was not yet prepared to give up hope for agreed settlement and therefore invited Congress and League representatives to visit London to discuss with His Majesty's Government "how best the meeting of the Constituent Assembly could be made effective and profitable". At the Congress session in Meerut in November, the demand was made for the Muslim League either to come into the Constituent Assembly or quit the interim government. Nehru threatened "struggle on a large scale" which was inevitable if things continued as they were. Patel declared the resolve not to run away from the interim government, except when the British

Government showed that they had "gone back on their pledge and betrayed us that we shall get out". Mutual recriminations continued and the communal situation, as was clear from the events in Noakhali, Bihar and Ahmadabad, was fast deteriorating so that civil war threatened the country. Nehru, Jinnah, Liaqat Ali Khan and Baldev Singh visited London, but failed to come to an agreement. The statement issued by His Majesty's Government declared that "the decisions of the section should, in the absence of agreement to the contrary, be taken by a simple majority vote of the representatives in the sections, and that it should be accepted by all parties as determining this procedure in the sections". They appealed to the Congress to agree to it and provided for reference to the Federal Court to decide matters of interpretation submitted by either party. Nehru and Baldev Singh did not feel happy at this decision. The Constituent Assembly met as scheduled without the Muslim League, and after electing Rajendra Prasad as President and discussing the Objectives Resolution adjourned till 20 January 1947. Meanwhile the All-India Congress Committee in its meeting on 3 January 1947, gave a directive, "that the Constituent Assembly should proceed with the work of framing a constitution of free India, and with a view to removing the difficulties that have arisen owing to varying interpretations, agree to advise action in accordance with the interpretation of the British Government in regard to the procedure to be followed in sections". But they cautioned against compulsion of a province and jeopardising the rights of the Sikhs in the Panjab. The Muslim League did not consider this decision of the Congress as an unequivocal acceptance of 16 May plan and decided against reconsidering its decision of July 1946, not to join the Assembly. On the other side, the Congress and minority community members demanded resignation of League representatives. The situation was critical. Wavell "was in sympathy with the Muslim League's contention" and asked the Secretary of State to call upon the Congress to confirm its adherence to the provision regarding sections and groupings, which alone might bring in the League into the Constituent Assembly. The Secretary of State was not prepared to go to that length, and then Nehru and Patel demanded resignation of League members in the government, failing which



they would resign.

Menon has described the situation thus; "The position that confronted His Majesty's Government was grave enough in all conscience. To ask for the resignation of the League representatives from the interim government would have serious repercussions in India and the Muslim countries of the world. To allow the Congress to resign would lead to even more disastrous consequences. His Majesty's Government had already committed itself to hand over power to Indian hands. The Cabinet Mission plan had been devised with the purpose of effecting a peaceful transfer of power with the agreement of the main political parties in India. His Majesty's Government had now exhausted all its resources to bring about such an agreement. The general situation in the country was alarming. The Central Government was a house divided against itself. In further communal disorders, it was doubtful if the loyalty of the Army and the Services could be relied upon". Hence the Labour Government decided, presumably on the advice of Lord Mountbatten, who was chosen to be the next Viceroy in place of Wavell, "to fix a definite date for its withdrawal from India" as it hoped that this "time limit would serve as a challenge to bring home to the Indian parties the imperative need for coming to a mutual understanding". However this object was realised only in the partition of the country which the Congress leaders accepted as inevitable and as a lesser evil. Events in the next few months gave Jinnah the satisfaction of having Pakistan which was deemed impracticable till then.

On February 20, 1947, Atlee, the Prime Minister, made a statement in the House of Commons, defining the policy which His Majesty's Government decided to pursue thereafter. After referring to the Cabinet Mission plan and the differences which had arisen among Indian parties which prevented smooth functioning of the Constituent Assembly and deprived it of its representative character fully, Atlee declared, "His Majesty's Government desire to hand over their responsibility to authorities established by a constitution approved by all parties in India in accordance with the Cabinet Mission plan. But unfortunately there is at present no clear prospect that such a constitution and such authorities will emerge. The present state of uncertainty is fraught with danger and cannot be

indefinitely prolonged. His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that it is their intention to take necessary steps to effect the transfer of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948". Further adverting to the necessity of peace and security as precedent to economic development and attainment of higher standard in life, Atlee said that they were anxious to transfer power to a government which "resting on the sure foundation of the support of the people is capable of maintaining peace and administering India with justice and efficiency". Hence he appealed to all parties to sink their differences and cooperate in that noble task. In case a constitution had not been worked out by a fully representative Constituent Assembly, before June 1948, Atlee warned, "His Majesty's Government will have to consider to whom the powers of the Central Government in British India should be handed over, on due date, whether as a whole to some form of Central Government for British India, or in some areas to the existing Provincial Government, or in such other way as may seem most reasonable and in the best interests of the Indian people". Preparatory steps must be taken and legislation would be introduced to modify the Government of India Act of 1935, to ensure efficiency of administration. Referring to the Indian States, the Prime Minister declared that they "do not intend to hand over their powers and obligations under Paramountcy to any Government of British India. It is not intended to bring Paramountcy, as a system, to a conclusion earlier than the date of the final transfer of power, but it is contemplated that for the intervening period the relations of the Crown with individual States may be adjusted by agreement". He appealed for the continuation of association of British and Indian people in future also. On this occasion was also announced the termination of the war-time appointment of Wavell as Viceroy and the appointment of Admiral the Viscount Mountbatten in his place. The new Viceroy belonged to the royal family, was a great-grand-son of Queen Victoria and cousin to King George VI, and had functioned successfully as the Supreme Commander of South-East Asia Command. In that capacity he had acquaintance with Indian affairs and had met Nehru as well. It has been mentioned by the authors of 'Freedom at Midnight', that his name had been suggested to Atlee by Nehru through his

friend Krishna Menon. The new Viceroy assumed charge in March and set into motion the process of transfer of power, which inevitably led to the division of India.

Atlee's declaration to transfer power by a certain date and to "take steps to that end in advance" was sincerely welcomed by the Congress which expressed its adherence to the Cabinet Mission plan and the interpretation put on it by the British Government in December 1946. The Working Committee demanded that the interim government should be treated as a Dominion Government and function as a Cabinet with full authority and responsibility as "any other arrangement is incompatible with good government". It called for cooperation of all parties in the work of constitution-making and invited the Muslim League "to join in this historic undertaking". It welcomed the decision of some States to join the Constituent Assembly and hoped that all others and their peoples would be effectively represented in it. The Working Committee admitted that the work of this Assembly was voluntary and that the constitution framed by it "will apply only to those areas which accept it". Also it declared that "any province or part of a province which accepts the constitution and desires to join the Union cannot be prevented from doing so. Thus there must be no compulsion either way, and the people will themselves decide their future". In this context, by another resolution the Working Committee, in view of the events in Panjab, suggested that the province should be divided into two parts, so as to separate the predominantly Muslim portion from the predominantly non-Muslim. This was done to put an end to violence which was fast gripping the population there and communal rioting on a large scale had broken out. Similar division of Bengal was also suggested. The Muslim League was in no mood to accept the invitation to join the Constituent Assembly and was intent on creating trouble in Panjab and North-West Frontier Province, as elsewhere also. With the resignation of the Unionist Ministry, Panjab was taken over by the Governor for administration under Section 93. The country was fast drifting into a condition of chaos with communal disturbances, deteriorating food situation, rising prices and strikes. Early action was required if the country was to be saved from anarchy and civil war. Mountbatten was therefore convinced of immediate action and expediting

transfer of power without waiting for the Constituent Assembly to complete its work, which was impossible in the existing situation. After meeting the leaders of political parties and taking into full consideration the various viewpoints, he prepared a plan and sent it to London for acceptance by the Cabinet. Meanwhile, it was shown to Nehru who criticised it severely and Mountbatten asked Menon to draft a fresh plan in the light of the comments. This plan had the approval of Nehru, and was taken by the Viceroy for acceptance by His Majesty's Government. Finally it was announced on 3 June 1947, after being communicated to the leaders of various parties and securing their assent.

The Plan according to which power was transferred was based on the partition of the country into two dominions. Provision was made for seeking the verdict of the people of Bengal and Panjab regarding their choice to join a particular dominion by dividing the legislative assembly into two sections, one of those representing the districts with a clear Muslim majority and the other of those with non-Muslim majority. If the majority of these decided about partition, the provinces would be divided and a separate Constituent Assembly would be formed for making the constitution of the dominion there. Similar was the position of Sind. In Assam, the district of Sylhet alone had a large Muslim majority, and to ascertain its choice a referendum was to be held there to find out whether the majority was for joining the new province of Eastern Bengal or remaining with Assam. Similarly in the North Western Frontier Province a referendum was to be held to choose their dominion. Subsequently fresh elections were to be held in Bengal and Panjab as also Sylhet, if it was decided to partition them to elect representatives for the Constituent Assembly. The actual partition would be made on the report of the Boundary Commission which would be appointed soon to determine the line of division. Negotiations were to be initiated between the representatives of the respective successor authorities about all subjects dealt with by the Central Government including defence, finance and communications, as also for treaties in regard to matters arising out of their transfer of power, and also between the wings of the partitioned provinces regarding division of assets and liabilities, police and other services, High Courts and provincial institutions etc. The policy relating to

Indian States as defined in the Cabinet Mission plan was not affected by this new declaration. It was also announced that the transfer of power might be effected earlier than June 1948, possibly in August 1947. With this final decision the stage was set for partition of the country and formation of the two dominions of India and Pakistan on 15 August 1947.

After the acceptance of the Mountbatten plan, the next problem was that of its implementation. It involved parliamentary legislation, ascertaining the verdict of the affected provinces, division of administrative services and armed forces, apportionment of assets and liabilities and the fixation of boundaries in the disputed areas. The provinces gave their verdict in June and July. The majority in Panjab Legislative Assembly favoured division by 126 votes to 90, and the members of the non-Muslim majority areas of West Bengal also decided in favour of partition and joining the Indian Constituent Assembly; but members from the Muslim majority areas of East Bengal voted against partition, but favoured joining a new Constituent Assembly and amalgamation of Sylhet with their province. In Panjab the Legislative Assembly, which met under a strong police guard, decided by a majority to join a new Constituent Assembly; but the majority of Muslim majority districts voted against partition, while those of non-Muslim majority districts of East Panjab decided on the partition of the province and then joining the Indian Constituent Assembly. Sind favoured joining the new Constituent Assembly. Referendum in Sylhet got majority for joining East Bengal. The majority in North West Frontier Province, where only about 50 per cent took part in the referendum, voted in favour of joining the new Constituent Assembly. Thus the provincial division problem was settled; and the Viceroy appointed a Boundary Commission with Radcliffe as its Chairman to fix the boundary line. Its report came after 15 August and brought extreme misery and chaos in its train. The British Government drafted the Indian Independence Bill which was adopted by the Parliament and gave legal sanction to the creation of the two dominions of India and Pakistan. The new Act was mainly an adaptation on the 1935 Act. The Bill had been shown to the leaders of Indian political parties and their comments incorporated in it. It was passed by the two Houses of Parliament and

received Royal Assent on 18 July. The next step was the appointment of Governors General for the two Dominions, while India chose Mountbatten to continue, Pakistan had Jinnah as its first Governor-General. Then followed the reconstitution of the Interim Government. The demand for resignation of League members by the others and threat of resignation by them would have brought about a serious crisis and might have upset the apple-cart. Hence Mountbatten decided to deprive League members of their portfolios and reallocate them so as to enable the Congress Wing of the Cabinet to take charge of affairs pertaining to the Dominion of India and the League representatives to take charge of corresponding subjects relating to Pakistan. The staff was also similarly divided. Thus, as Menon points out, "two separate provisional governments were established, one for India and one for Pakistan, each to deal with its own business and to consult the other on matters of common concern". Decisions were also taken on the mechanics of partition, and dealt with division of staff organisations and records, services and institutions, assets and liabilities of the Government of India, future economic relations, domicile and diplomatic relations, etc. A Partition Council was also established to deal with these matters. A Steering Committee was appointed with H. M. Patel as India's representative and Muhammad Ali as that of Pakistan. By July these two officers had settled most of the problems, only a few items were left to be resolved by the Arbitral Tribunal after 15 August. But ultimately these were settled by the two themselves. The Army was also divided and involved breaking up of battalions, regiments, installations, training institutions, etc. The Partition Council decided that from 15 August each of the two dominions would have within their respective territories "forces under its own operational control, composed predominantly of non-Muslims and Muslims respectively". This partition was conducted under the Joint Defence Council and it continued to function till 1 April 1948. Also British troops withdrew from India. Last came the Radcliffe Award about the boundaries of the west and east. It satisfied none of the parties but all accepted it. India retained the old name and thus its "identity as an internationally-recognised State" was not affected. By the Indian Independence (International Arrangements) Order 1947, issued on 14

August 1947, membership of all international organisations, together with all the rights and obligations devolved solely upon the Dominion of India. Pakistan was left to seek membership by itself. Also it was decided that "the existing diplomatic relations abroad should continue to function for India", and Pakistan was to make its own arrangements. As regards protection of minorities and enjoyment of civic rights, the Partition Council made decisions on 22 July 1947, according to which the two Dominions declared their determination to establish peaceful conditions to complete reconstruction, gave assurances of fair and equitable treatment to the minorities after transfer of power, as also to safeguard the legitimate interests of all citizens irrespective of religion, caste or sex. Exercise of normal civic rights, liberty of speech and association, right of worship and protection of language and culture were also guaranteed. They also declared their resolve not to tolerate violence and agreed to the stationing of a Border Force to maintain peace on the Panjab border. This resolve, however, remained a dead letter so far as Pakistan was concerned. On 14 August, Pakistan was inaugurated and on 15 August came into being the independent Dominion of India. With this consummation the long struggle for freedom from British imperial rule came to an end, and the break was brought about with all good-will on both the sides. India decided to continue as a part of the British Commonwealth.

The Independence came, legally as an Act of Parliament, but it was the consummation of a long course of suffering and struggle by the people of India. International forces, the condition of the United Kingdom as a result of War, as well as the leadership of Gandhiji who prepared the nation for unlimited sacrifice, helped the attainment of independence. The stage was cleared of obstacles and the ground was free for the new national government, without hindrance to bring about social and economic freedom and build up a strong and prosperous nation. The new Constitution of India which was prepared by the Constituent Assembly came into force on 26 January 1950 and provided a legal framework for the implementation of freedom.

## *Indian States—Their Integration*

The nationalist demand for Indian independence was usually countered by the British Government asserting their responsibility for safeguarding minority community interests and their obligations towards the Princes of Indian states arising out of the treaties, engagements and sanads contracted with them. Freedom was thus contingent on the solution of these two problems which were resolved by the partition of India, on one side, and the obliteration of princely separatism, on the other. The princely order was unrealistically conscious of its privileges and prerogatives, and laid claim to the status of sovereignty, often verging on exercise of despotic rule over their subjects. Their pretensions came directly into conflict with traditions of democracy, solicitude for the rights of people and sentiments of the unity of India so fondly cherished by nationalist India. Indian independence would be meaningless if more than 600 States were permitted separate existence owning suzerainty to the paramount authority, the British Crown. The integration of Indian states was therefore an essential preliminary to the Independence of India, and that was achieved before the Independence Act was brought into effect. For a clear understanding of the revolution which came about in 1947, it may be pertinent at this stage to analyse the nature of paramountcy and the position of Indian princes therein as it developed since 1858 when the Crown of England assumed direct administration of India. The evolution of paramountcy in its various stages has been discussed in the previous volume. In the present chapter,



process of its growth as it affected the status of the princely states will be examined as also their imbecile efforts to retain their separate identity on the extinction of British dominion over India.

As narrated earlier, before 1857 the paramount power had exercised a large degree of control over the states irrespective of the terms of treaties, and mainly on grounds of paramountcy whose scope had widened to include every aspect of administration. Misgovernment, disloyalty or financial incompetence to meet liabilities of subsidy, tribute or debt provided occasions for interference and even annexations of territory. In actual practice, all states had to suffer imposition of paramount will which had no limits of its application. Independence of states and non-interference in their internal administration were affirmed by the paramount power as a principle but in actual practice, and depending on the circumstances of the state or general situation in the country, intervention and control over state administration had been a phenomenon of frequent occurrence. Pragmatism and not theory determined application of supreme authority which comprehended within its scope determination of succession, appointment and dismissal of Diwans and other high officials, revenue administration, eradication of social evils, regulation of relationship between the prince and his local chiefs, maladministration, limitation of armed strength and relations with external powers or other princely states. Nothing, however, trivial was immune from the exercise of paramountcy and the Residents had turned mostly into super-rulers whose writ mainly prevailed over-riding even the orders of the prince. Thus paramountcy had asserted itself without being made into a system and was largely the product of supreme military strength of the East India Company and its suzerainty over the whole of India. The Revolt of 1857 had shaken the equanimity and complacency of the British people and their Parliament, and the first measure adopted to rehabilitate their position was the extinction of the merchant company and assumption of direct rule by the Crown and Parliament of England. No substantial change was made in the form or system of government except that notionally the personality of the Queen of England was introduced as the Sovereign in place of

an impersonal Company of merchants. The Queen was presumed to inherit all the prerogatives of the Mughal Emperor who was superseded and shorn of his title and nominal suzerainty. The princes of India who were supposed to own formal allegiance to the effete Mughal sovereign in Delhi, were believed to have automatically transferred their allegiance to the Queen of England and acknowledged her suzerainty. Thus was brought about a psychological revolution in the relationship of the Indian States and the paramount power, which spontaneously augmented the scope and extent of paramountcy and to that extent further diminished and debased the sovereign rights of the Indian princes. The succeeding period was characterised by making paramountcy into a principle, a system with set rules and uniform practices formulated and enforced by the Political Department of the Government of India, superseding the rights and obligations contained in the treaties made between the Government of India, and the Indian States. From the position of equality, the rulers were degraded to the status of a feudatory, and mutuality of obligations had been supplanted by imposition of duties and liabilities which the princes could not transgress with impunity. Distinctions between the various grades and categories of rulers also got obliterated and, unmindful of the engagements contained in the treaties, all of them from the biggest to the smallest were treated alike and subjected to a uniformity of rules and practices.

The British Government had been shaken by the convulsion of 1857 and, conscious of the uneasiness of the rulers of Indian States because of the application of Doctrine of Lapse, wanted to appease the princes and gain their cooperation in combating the disaffection of the people. The states were considered as break waters to contain the raging storm and were to be maintained as such in a period of rising popular discontent. The Queen's Proclamation of 1858 therefore barred further extension of territory and assured the princes of continuity of their rule. The Queen solemnly declared "We shall respect the rights, dignity and honour of the Native Princes" and the Viceroy issued sanads to the rulers permitting successions by adoption and thus assured them of continuity of succession and perpetuation of their dynasty. By this

measure the chapter of annexations was closed. But a new condition of loyalty to the Crown and faithfulness "to the conditions of the Treaties, grants and engagements which record its obligations to the British Government" was introduced. Canning, the new Viceroy, did not believe that this concession implied absolute non-intervention by the paramount power. On 30 April 1860, he wrote, "the proposed measure will not debar the Government of India from stepping in to set right such serious abuses in a Native Government as may threaten any part of the country with anarchy or disturbance, nor from assuming temporary charge of a Native State when there shall be sufficient reason to do so. This had long been the practice. We have repeatedly exercised the power,...and it is one which used with good judgement and moderation, it is very desirable that we should retain. It will, indeed, when once the proposed assurance shall have been given, be more easy than heretofore to exercise it. Neither will the assurance diminish our right to visit a state with highest penalties, even confiscation, in the event of disloyalty or flagrant breach of engagement". Embargo on annexations facilitated greater exercise of paramount authority, which might extend to deposition of the ruler and constant control of administration in the interest of the British empire, for the good of the subjects or for the sake of development and security of India as a whole. Canning vehemently asserted, "the Crown of England stands forth the unquestioned ruler and paramount power in all India and is for the first time brought face to face with its feudatories. We do desire to keep alive a feudal aristocracy where one still exists. The safety of our rule is increased, not diminished, by the maintenance of native chiefs well affected to us", and that was possible, "if we could keep up native states without political power, but as royal instruments". Thus was introduced a change in the status of the princes, who were reduced to the position of a feudal chief in place of an independent ruler. Henceforth they were feudatories, possessed of only such powers and privileges as were allowed to them by the paramount power. The grant of honours, decorations and right of salutes by the Crown further debased their status which certainly was not

one of sovereign ruling over his territory. The Sanads also imposed conditions of "good behaviour and of service, military and political in time of danger". Full sovereignty and freedom from interference were contingent on the ruler engaging on his part to "execute justice and promote the happiness and welfare of his people". Lee Warner has correctly interpreted the position. He wrote "these obligations, as well as the general engagement...indicate a growing conviction that the union whilst it demands on the part of the British Government patient toleration and the avoidance of mischievous interference, also imposes a responsibility for good government on the states directly, and on the British power, if the states are remiss". In the succeeding years, control over the states became far closer and while the state was guaranteed against annexation, personal responsibility of the ruler and his liability to punishment were emphasised.

Lawrence continuously harped on reform in administration and removal of social evils and even imposed penalties on the defaulters. Mayo desired abandonment of "the mixture of laissez faire and niggling interference" and wanted the princes to "be told what they will be allowed to do and what they will not be allowed to do." He demanded good government from them as the price of support to them. The system of holding darbars and Viceregal visits to the states further exposed the subordinate character of the princes and "status of allegiance". Northbrook's treatment of the Gaikwar of Baroda, who was deposed for maladministration, after the charge of disloyalty for which he was tried by a commission had been withdrawn, signified that the prince was not immune from arrest and trial and was subject to punishment for his lapses. In the time of Lytton, the position of the Crown was further reinforced by the assumption of the title of Empress of India by the Queen of England. On that occasion, the Viceroy in his speech delivered in Delhi on 1 January 1877, told the princes and chiefs that "Her Majesty regards her interests as identified with yours, and it is with the wish to confirm the confidence and perpetuate the intimacy of relations now so happily uniting the British Crown and its feudatories and allies, that Her Majesty has been graciously pleased to

assume the Imperial title we proclaim today". This identity of interest between the mighty superior and weak inferior, implied absolute subordination of the latter to the former, and that was in practice the position of the Indian princes. "Personal relations between the King Emperor and the Indian rulers" further strengthened the base of paramountcy. The Government of India insisted on proper education of the princes to make them fit to assume the responsibilities of a ruler. Curzon declared that the Government must be fully satisfied that "the young chief has received the education and training that will qualify him to rule over men" before bestowing upon him this right. Before the end of the nineteenth century right of recognition of succession, approval of the ministers of the princes, their deposition or removal and full control during minority administration had been assumed by the paramount power.

Lee Warner has referred to three events which clearly illustrate the theory and practice of paramountcy after 1858. These were the deposition of Gaikwar of Baroda, rendition of Mysore and the suppression of the Manipur revolt, which according to that author "illustrate the penalties of disloyalty", and "furnished an occasion for emphasising several general principles affecting the relations of Native States with the British Government". The ruler of Baroda was initially charged with the intention to poison the British resident there which act was termed "High crime against Her Majesty the Queen and a breach of the condition of loyalty to the Crown ... and an act of hostility against the British Government". Because of lack of unanimity among the Commissioners appointed to investigate the charge, it was subsequently dropped. But the Gaikwar, though absolved of the crime of disloyalty, was deposed as a ruler and deprived of "all rights, honours and privileges thereto appertaining on the grounds of notorious misconduct, gross misgovernment of the state and evident incapacity to carry into effect the necessary reforms". But the state was allowed to exist under another ruler chosen by the Government of India. Thus was confirmed the principle of personal responsibility of the ruler and his liability to punishment without affecting the continuance of the state which was

guaranteed against annexation. This practice was in variance with that of the pre-1857 position. And it became a general rule in the succeeding period that the ruler was punished with deposition, attenuation of the right of salute and displeasure marked by non-grant of honours or their withdrawal. The second case was that of the return of Mysore state to its ruler after its being administered by the Government of India for fifty years. The treaty made on the occasion clearly enunciated the rights and obligations of the ruler in his new charge, and many of the conditions had particular reference to the peculiar nature of that state arising from the character of the government which had prevailed there. The importance of this incident lies in the fact that the obligations so imposed on Mysore were deemed to be of general application, irrespective of the treaties made with them. The restoration of the state was conditional on the ruler or his successors conforming to the conditions prescribed in the treaty. A few principles were incorporated in that document. One was that a succession to be valid must have the recognition of the Governor-General in Council, as also for the rulers to remain faithful in allegiance and subordination to the Crown and performance of "all the duties which in virtue of such allegiance and subordination may be demanded of them". There were clauses restricting the right of the ruler to build forts, import or manufacture arms and maintain troops beyond the numbers sanctioned by the Governor General in Council. Indian coins were to be a legal tender in Mysore which could not have a separate coinage. There were clauses relating to cantonment jurisdiction, grant of land for railways, telegraphs and post offices, extradition of criminals, manufacture of salt and opium. Then followed the important condition that the Maharaja "shall at all times conform to such advice as the Governor-General in Council may offer him with a view to the management of his finances, the settlement and collection of his revenues, the imposition of taxes, the administration of justice, the extension of commerce, the encouragement of trade, agriculture and industry, and any other objects connected with the advancement of His Highness's interests, the happiness of his subjects, and his relations with the British Government". Breach or non-observance of these was

to be visited with resumption of the state or making other arrangements for its government. The conditions contained in this instrument of transfer were applied to other states though the treaty provisions in their case might be different.

The third incident was the revolt in Manipur and the assassination of the Chief Commissioner of Assam and some of his officers who had gone there to quell the disturbance. In this case the main issue was that of dealing with the Senapati and Yuvaraj who had led the revolt and offered resistance to the British force. They were tried and sentenced, the Senapati being executed. The plea that they were not British subjects and in their case international law should apply was not accepted. In that context the Government of India enunciated a principle which was published in the Gazette of India and was deemed of universal application. The Secretary of State ruled that "of the right of the Government of India to interfere after the forcible dispossession of the Maharaja there can be no question. It is admittedly the right and duty of Government to settle successions in the Protected States of India generally. Your interference was necessary also in the interests of the British Government, which has of late years been brought into much closer relations with the state and "its subject tribes than was formerly the case and cannot safely tolerate disorders therein". The Government of India laid down the dictum, "Every succession must be recognised by the British Government, and no succession is valid until recognition has been given. This principle is fully understood and invariably observed". Also it enunciated the theory that "the rules of International Law have no bearing upon the relations between the Government of India, as representing the Queen Empress, on the one hand, and the native states under the suzerainty of Her Majesty, on the other. The paramount supermacy of the former presuppose, and implies the subordination of the latter. In the exercise of their high prerogatives, the Government of India have, in Manipur as in other protected states, the unquestioned right to remove by administrative order any person whose presence in the state may seem objectionable". The rule was laid down that "any armed and violent resistance to the arrest of such person was an act of rebellion, and can no more

be justified by a plea of self-defence than could resistance to a police officer armed with a Magistrate's order in British India". Thus the identity of state's subjects with the subjects of British India was stressed and the right of the Government of India to interfere there emphasised. The rules laid down in the Manipur case were deemed to be of general application and enforced in all the states without reservation as to the character of treaty provisions in any individual case.

Lee Warner has analysed the sources for the obligations imposed on the princely states and the price which they had to pay for the union with British India under the Crown. An essential condition was the acceptance of loyalty to the Queen or King of England and many consequences flowed from this recognition. According to the author "the channels which contribute to the rights or duties of the Indian Chiefs are five—the royal prerogative, Acts or resolutions of Parliament, the law of Nature, direct agreement between the parties, and usage". To these may be added the general interest of the country as a whole which must over-ride the particular interests of a state or the exclusive right of a prince. Obligations devolving on a state under the category of Royal prerogative included the right of the Viceroy, representing the King, "to recognise successions, assume the guardianship of minor princes, to confer or withdraw titles, decorations and salutes, to sanction the acceptance of foreign orders, to grant passports and to recognise or appoint consular officers". No succession was valid unless recognised was the principle clearly enunciated in 1891, though in practice it had been asserted all along. Minority administration was necessarily conducted by British officers and fully controlled by the Government of India, even though Regency Councils, with a fair sprinkling of British officers and the Resident, were appointed in many cases. Since the time of Mayo, education of the minor prince had been supervised by the Government of India and colleges were established for the education of the sons of Indian princes. Proper education and training of the prospective chief was "a matter of imperial concern". Curzon was frank enough to declare that the



Government of India must satisfy itself that "the young Chief has received the education and training that will qualify him to rule over men before he was entrusted with the task of Government". The Supreme Government was alone competent to grant honours and titles, fix salutes and confirm decorations. The ruler could not accept any honours from a foreign power except with the prior sanction of the Government of India. All titles which a prince adopted were to be confirmed by the paramount power; and invariably its displeasure was expressed by meddling with such honours, titles and salutes, etc. Though the Acts of Parliament do not have direct application in the Indian States, yet many of its decisions had the effect of restricting the liberty of the princes to act despotically. Lee Warner has given the instance of religious toleration as one of the matters in which "the protecting power is bound to interfere on behalf of its own subjects resident in that state, and is justified in protesting against the application to the rest of the inhabitants of a system of intolerance condemned by a Suzerain". Under law of natural justice, Lee Warner has included suppression of slavery, of inhuman practices such as cutting off ears and noses, mutilation, impalement of criminals, besides sati, infanticide, etc. Since the Revolt of 1857, the Government of India constantly insisted on the suppression of these practices and did not desist from intervention in case of default.

The treaties made between the Indian states and the Government of India had imposed various obligations on the former and conferred rights on the latter, and these were quite comprehensive. But it will be incorrect to assume that the relations between the two depended only on the commitments contained in a particular treaty. In the period after 1858, the treaties were codified and the general tendency of the political Department of the Government of India, which was charged with the conduct of relations with the states, was to read the treaties together and apply their provisions generally without reference to the engagements entered into with a particular state. For example the treaty with Mysore of 1881 came to be the standard of conduct with all the states. By the treaties, the Government of India had assumed the

right to protect the states from external encroachment and internal insurgence. As a corollary to this, the paramount power assumed the right to limit the armed strength of the states, and deprived them of the power to build forts, manufacture or import arms and ammunition and otherwise denied them the resources to wage wars of defence or offence. Orders for the dispersion of the troops of Sindia were a consequence of this attribute of paramount authority. All contacts with foreign powers, protection and control of state subjects when residing in a foreign territory, and safeguarding the interests of foreign subjects residing in an Indian state were the exclusive prerogative of the paramount power. Rules regarding extradition of criminals were also framed and the states had to conform to them. By the treaties generally the princes were allowed independence in their internal administration; but from the beginning of the British rule in practice, the Government of India through its Residents had exercised indefinite control over state administration either for the good of the state, welfare of its subjects or interests of its own territories and subjects or impelled by considerations of humanity and international obligations. It was the duty of the British Government to carry "into effect the international agreements" and, as Raghbir Singh rightly remarks, "it became imperative for the States to honour the agreements thus entered by the Paramount Power". Thus gradually after 1858, the states began to lose their position and powers as independent units, and interference by the Political Department increased and became general. Raghbir Singh has painted the picture vividly when he wrote, "The Department supervised the relations with the States, and it now began to crystallize into a bureaucratic mould. As its position grew stronger, it began to develop a tendency to ignore treaty stipulations. The method followed was not to break a treaty formally, but to assume powers, no where granted by it or to apply the rights admitted by a treaty with one particular State to others which had not accepted these conditions. A series of rules began to appear by which the Department invariably determined the questions relating to the States". Thus grew up the practice of "reading all

Indian treaties together". This fact led Curzon to declare that the "political system of India.....represents a series of relationships that have grown up between the Crown and the Indian Princes under widely differing historical conditions, but which in process of time have gradually conformed to a single type".

Another element which operated to "an ever-growing closeness of control" and identity of interests between the states and the paramount power was the need for economic development and uniformity of administrative system in the country as a whole. As Dodwell has put it, "The development of communications, the building of railways, the construction of telegraph lines, and the growth of the public press, accompanied by an ever rising standard of administration in British India itself, all made for an increased degree of interference in the territories of the princes." Owing to the geographical unity of India, development of modern means of communication and transport such as telegraphs and railways, tended to ignore the separateness of state territories which interspersed with British Indian provinces. With developing communication, isolation of states became more and more impracticable. "A uniform railway and telegraph system, would manifestly be more beneficial, not only to British India, but also to the states, than a variety of guages, rates and regulations". Hence the Government of India pushed trunk lines into the states and obtained land from the rulers as well as the right of plenary jurisdiction along the railway lines or in telegraph and postal stations. Mysore treaty included free grant of land needed for these purposes, monopoly of telegraph system and the over-riding nature of postal services. Similar special agreements were made with a number of other states. From the time of Mayo till the close of the century railways were extended into the states and brought about limitation of their sovereignty. Similarly, the Government of India compelled the states to accept its monopoly in the production of salt and opium which deprived the concerned states of this source of income, and affected their revenues. Along with these, in the interest of common economic development, followed a uniform currency and abolition of customs barriers. Raghubir Singh has correctly inferred

that "for economic reasons, a new policy was now put into force which was to transform the States into an integral part of the Indian polity". Owing to the growth of rapid communications, ideas of freedom and social justice, then prevalent in the world, could scarcely leave state people unaffected. Also the doings of the rulers and occurrences of atrocities, aberrations of justice and tolerance of social evils were bound to attract the attention of the paramount power much more rapidly and compel it to interfere in the affairs of the states to avoid censure by the world press and public opinion. In times of famine or other natural calamities, the subjects of states could not be left to their fate by reason of the inadequacy of financial resources or deficiency of administrative machinery, and invariably the Government of India was led to interfere and provide uniformity of practice in famine relief. Officers from British India were often deputed to supervise such activities. Also in matters like land settlements and operation of revenue system, close control was exercised to prevent hardship and injustice on the state subjects. Such interference was most frequent in the time of Curzon's viceroyalty. Thus economic and administrative considerations led to the increasing control over the princes, thereby limiting the exercise of sovereignty by them.

It will be clear from this review that by the end of the nineteenth century, the rulers of Indian states had lost most of the attributes of sovereignty to the paramount power and exercised only such powers as were left to them, subject to constant check and control by the Government of India. Long before the Crown assumed direct administration of India, the Indian states had been deprived of freedom to determine their relations with each other or with any foreign powers. Internationally the states were not a separate personality and formed part of British India diplomatically. Lee Warner has summed up the position in the following words. "They have resigned their rights of peace and war and charged the Supreme Government with the duty of protecting them from foreign foes. In return, the supreme authority has the right to insist on their cooperation for the common defence. They have absolutely surrendered their rights of negotiation, confederacy, and legation, and

since they are partners in the benefits secured by the interstatal action of the British Government, they must fulfil the obligations attached to the rights derived from such action". With the complete loss of their external sovereignty, it will be difficult to assume that the rulers of the Indian states were sovereign powers. Even in their internal administration, though their freedom to conduct it was recognised by treaties, they had been gradually reduced to a state of subordination and conducted their government only under effective control and supervision by the paramount power. It may be correct to state that they exercised only delegated authority and were liable to punishment for negligence and dereliction of duty. The scope of interference in the internal affairs of the states by the Government of India was very wide and perhaps unlimited. The states had the obligation to render full cooperation to the paramount power in time of war and render all the assistance the imperial army required in time of peace. The strength and equipment of their armed forces was regulated by the Government of India, and when the system of Imperial Service Troops was introduced by Dufferin they had to maintain such troops in full efficiency to serve with the Indian army when need arose for action. Lee Warner has mentioned other factors demanding acceptance by the states of intervention by the supreme power. He writes, "The perpetration of their Governments is incompatible with the dismemberment of their states, internal disorder or gross misrule. They must therefore accept Imperial intervention to prevent or correct such abuses. The laws of natural justice and the principle of religious toleration must be observed. The right of self-preservation, with its incidental rights, gives to the British Government an indefinable right to protect Imperial interests where they may be injured by the unfriendly action of the King's allies, and it suggests a possible right of intervention in their internal affairs, as in the regulation of currency, commerce or in the establishment of postal union". Thus apart from control in respect of succession or minority administration and general demand for loyalty, the rulers of the states were subjected to a large degree of intervention in their internal administration. The various Viceroy, from Canning to Reading

did not fail to remind them of their inferior status and admonish them to devote themselves to the better administration of their people. In a sense the states had developed into an integral part of British India and claims of sovereignty by themselves as well as assertion of their privileged status were baseless. Curzon correctly depicted the position when he said in 1899 that "the native chiefs had become by our policy an integral factor in the imperial organisation of India".

Much of the change in the position of the princes vis à vis the paramount power at the beginning of the present century had been the consequence of the admission of India into the fast moving stream of modernity. Revolutionary economic, social, cultural and political modifications were taking place and no part of the country, whether ruled by an Indian prince or the British could remain unaffected. Material developments like railways and telegraphs had united the country, a wave of social reform was sweeping away the age old institutions and superstitious practices. New western type of education had found a welcome in the country and colleges and universities had within their jurisdiction the Indian states and British provinces equally. Administrative defects anywhere attracted the attention of the press which had universal coverage. Natural calamities like famines and plague made no distinction between the two types of administrative divisions. The people also on their part in their social and cultural contacts had ever ignored this artificial distinction between native and British territory. The Government of India could not escape the opprobrium when evils prevailed in an Indian state which compelled constant and close review of and supervision over state administration. This occasioned all embracing, comprehensive direction of the internal government of the Indian states. The Government of India justified growing surveillance on the ground of its responsibility to maintain general peace, order and good government over the whole of India. At the same time, disputes regarding succession, deterioration in the character of rulers leading to atrocious conduct by some of them and the declining standards of administration in states invoked interference by the paramount power. This led the Political Department to tighten its embrace and develop a case

law for general application thereby making the states more and more subordinate. Interference in internal affairs assumed the character of a system. The tendency to read the treaties together obliterated distinctions between them and ignoring of provisions in individual treaties. The attitude of Curzon was illustrative of the change which had come about and led to wide resentment among the princes.

The new Viceroy was a high priest of efficiency and could brook no dereliction of duty. He gave tremendous impulse to reform of administration and vehemently demanded purge of evils in it. His admonitions to the princes for good government and imposition of restraints on their foreign trips or their indulgence in personal pleasure to the neglect of their duty as rulers were motivated by his desire to bring state administration into line with the one prevailing in British India. When he found a large number of princes going to Europe and spending long time there, he directed that they should seek his permission before leaving the state. In a letter to them, published in the Government Gazette in 1900, he invited their attention to their obligation to the people entrusted to their charge and expounded the controlling authority inherent in the paramount power. He reminded them that "the first and paramount duty of a Native Prince lay towards his own state and people. In return for security of tenure which by virtue of the protection of the Supreme Government he enjoyed in his exalted position, that Government was entitled to demand that he should devote his best energies, not to the pursuit of pleasure nor to the cultivation of absentee interests or amusements, but to the welfare of his own subjects and administration". Conditions were imposed for the grant of leave to go out by the Viceroy. Only a year earlier, in his Gwalior speech, Curzon had emphasised this aspect of the duties of a ruler and had brought home to them the limitations on their sovereignty. Calling the chief an "integral factor in the imperial organisation", he stressed the fact that "he is concerned no less than the Viceroy or the Lieutenant Governor in the administration of the country. I claim him as my colleague and partner. He cannot remain vis-a-vis of the Empire a loyal subject of Her Majesty the Queen, and

vis-a-vis of his own people, a frivolous or irresponsible despot. He must justify and not abuse the authority committed to him; he must be the servant as well as master of his people". In this sense the prince ceased to be a sovereign ruler but became a mere dignitary, an official, a colleague of the head of British bureaucracy, who was charged with certain responsibilities and exercised jurisdiction assigned to him. If he failed to act up to the trust reposed in him he was amenable to discipline and liable to punishment. This was a position far distant from that of a sovereign. Curzon did not hesitate to depose Holkar for his conduct or chide the Gaikwar. The policy followed by Curzon, apart from the emphasis laid on it, was not different from the actual practice which had developed during the past half a century or so.

Curzon did not hesitate to claim the right to satisfy himself that a prince had received adequate training and education to qualify him to rule over his subjects. And he did not fail to pull them up whenever their administration did not come upto his standard. Practically every aspect of their government was subject to his supervision and he deputed officers from British India to set right the defects therein and assimilate it with the system prevailing in the provinces. Efforts were made to bring about some form of uniformity of administrative practice all over India, and in his regime practically every major state had a complement of British Indian officers to manage the affairs of the state. Land revenue system, famine relief organisation and many other aspects of government were reformed in various states to bring them into line with the system prevailing in British provinces, despite opposition or unwillingness of the princes. The situation then was also such as to call for the exercise of paramount authority to set right the evils of state government. Public opinion in India and the world outside was growing vigilant and was intolerant of abuses in administration wherever they might be. In the situation the British Government could find no excuse to exonerate itself from blame for whatever happened in the states on the plea of their autonomy. However, Curzon had no mercy for delinquents whether they were in British India or the states.



His excessive interest in maintaining efficiency made for frequent occasions for interference which created uneasiness in the minds of the princes and provoked criticism by the press and public opinion in India. But Curzon followed the lines chalked out earlier and what he did was neither novel nor unprecedented, except that his emphasis on the rights of paramount power and their enunciation was frank and often offensively expressed. He merely highlighted the system which had prevailed and developed by his predecessors. All that he did was to tighten the rein of control. The Political Department in his regime generally regularised the basis of relationship with the princes and formalised the practice, usage and conventions which had been evolved in individual cases. The treaty stipulations had been ignored and the rights, authority or control exercised or claimed in one state were indiscriminately applied to all other states unmindful of their circumstances or treaty stipulations. He summed up the position aptly in the words that "the sovereignty of the Crown is everywhere unchallenged. It has itself laid down limitations of its own prerogative". The status of Indian states was correctly defined by Curzon in his Bahawalpur speech in 1903. He said "The political system of India is neither feudalism nor federation; it is embodied in no constitution, it does not always rest upon a treaty; it bears no resemblance to a league. It represents a series of relationships that have grown up between the Crown and the Indian Princes under widely differing historical conditions, but which in process of time have gradually conformed to a single type". The princes felt uneasy and faint murmurs of resentment were heard but the voice was feeble. His orders to the states caused dissatisfaction among them and motivated some criticism of the supremacy of paramount power.

Curzon's administration, his tone of superciliousness and discourtesy towards Indians, as well as sublime disregard of political aspirations of the people produced a wave of disaffection and activation of the process of national movement directed towards attainment of Swaraj. Public agitation, both in its non-violent and violent phases, involving triple boycott of foreign goods, government educational institutions

and British judicial system, on the one side, and terrorist activities on the other, on the issue of partition of Bengal and demand for self-government or Home Rule, grew in intensity in the time of his successor Lord Minto. In his attempt to combat the national movement, the Viceroy, besides having recourse to repression and constitutional reforms, thought of wooing the cooperation of the princes to defeat political agitation in British India. Their role of breakwater to the storm, as in 1857, was appreciated and Minto sought their cooperation and support in containing popular agitation. As Dodwell has put it "They were to be cultivated rather than coerced". And as a step in that direction Minto tried to come into closer personal touch with the princes, discuss matters of common interest with them and made every effort to assuage their feelings. He publicly stated "that he was trying to avoid issuing general instructions as far as possible" and deal with the states individually. He restored the state of Banaras and discouraged indiscriminate intervention in the affairs of the states. He wanted to associate the Indian states in the general policy of the empire. Minto declared that "The foundation of the whole system is the recognition of identity of interests between the Imperial Government and the Durbars"; and called the princes as "helpers and colleagues in the task of imperial rule". As part of the reform scheme, he proposed the creation of a Council of Princes to operate as a check on the democratic trend of new legislatures. However, this part of the scheme did not materialise. Nevertheless, Minto and his immediate successor Hardinge exhibited apparent change in policy towards the states by holding occasional conferences to deliberate on common matters of the states. But there was no substantial change in the relative position of the states and the paramount power. Minto's Udaipur speech of 1909 did not fail to remind the princes of their inferior status. He declared, "Our policy is, with rare exceptions, one of non-interference in the internal affairs of the Native States. But in guaranteeing their internal independence and in undertaking their protection against external aggression, it naturally follows that the Imperial Government has assumed certain degree of responsibility for the general soundness of

their administration and would not consent to incur the reproach of being an indirect instrument of misrule. There are also certain matters in which the Government of India has to safeguard the interests of the community as a whole, as well as those of the Paramount power, such as railways, telegraphs and other services of an imperial character. But the relationship of the Supreme Government to the States is one of suzerainty". Nevertheless he avoided "uniformity and subservience to precedents" and "endeavoured to deal with questions as they arose with reference to existing treaties, the merits of each case, local conditions, antecedent circumstances, and the particular state of development, feudal and constitutional, of individual principalities". This visible change in procedure, did not, however, materially affect the exercise of paramountcy in which there was no alteration.

Hardinge and Chelmsford, the next two Viceroy, maintained the new spirit by holding conferences to discuss matters pertinent to the states. Their assemblage at one centre afforded opportunity to the princes to discuss their common problems and generated a feeling of solidarity in them. Also a new generation of princes, with wide education and experience of the world, now emerged, and they were dissatisfied with the steamrolling character of the operation of the Political Department. They demanded frequent occasions for mutual discussion of common problems. The Great War and the rising tempo of national movement added premium to the cooperation of the princes with the Government of India. Hence a number of Conferences were held, and Hardinge was prompted to declare, "We have made it our aim to cultivate close and friendly relations with the ruling Princes, to show by every means that we trust them and look on them as helpers and colleagues in the great task of imperial rule and so to foster in them a spirit of responsibility and pride in their work which no external supervision can produce". The Conferences held by Chelmsford took some definite decisions regarding procedure in matters like minority administration. But the imminence of constitutional change in British India made the princes anxious about their position in that new set up. In their meetings with Montague, they demanded redress of their

grievances and prayed for their not being "left at the mercy of the legislatures, more specially those connected with the provinces" when the Government of India assumed a democratic character. Perhaps their fear of popular government outdistanced their dread of the all-pervading paramount power. It was natural too when faint traces of political consciousness were visible in the subject people of some states.

The report on Constitutional Reforms did not devote much attention to the state problem, nonetheless it recommended re-examination of the whole position of relationship between the states and the Government of India in the context of changes which were then being introduced in the polity of British India. The major recommendation related to the establishment of a Council of Princes, with its Standing Committee to help and advise the Viceroy and the Political Department. Other recommendations concerned appointment of commissions of enquiry to investigate and report in cases of dispute between states, or between the states and the governments in British India, central and local, as also in respect of the misconduct of a ruling prince or member of his family. The Report desired establishment of direct political relations between important states and the Government of India as well as some machinery for joint deliberations on matters of common interest. The Report summed up the position of the states thus: "The States are guaranteed security from without, the Paramount Power acts for them in relation to foreign powers and other States, and it intervenes when the internal peace of their territories is seriously threatened. On the other hand, the States' relations to foreign powers are those of Paramount Power; they share the obligations of common defence, and they are under a general responsibility for the good Government and welfare of their territories, the relationship of the Paramount Power with the States is not merely contractual relationship, resting on treaties made more than a century ago. It is a living, growing relationship shaped by circumstances and policy". It was a reaffirmation of the overwhelming scope of paramount authority. In line with the recommendations of the Report, after the Government of India Act of 1919 came into operation, the British Government

established a Chamber of Princes with 120 members, whose meetings were held once a year under the presidentship of the Viceroy. A Chancellor was elected and a Standing Committee was appointed under him to discuss important matters. It was an "advisory and consultative body", formed to enable the Viceroy "to take its counsel freely in matters relating to the territories of the Indian states generally, and in matters that affect those territories jointly with British India". The Chamber was not concerned "with the internal affairs of individual States". Its formation roused strong hopes among the princes and it was expected to take up "weighty matters concerning relationship of the States with the Crown and concerning other points of contact with British India". But the apathy of some bigger states, general lack of interest among the princes, inability of the Government of India to introduce any radical change in the conduct of its relationship with the states and the restricted nature of its agenda as well as the attitude of the Viceroy did not contribute to the effectiveness of the Chamber of Princes as a deliberative body or having any solid impact on Government policy towards the states.

Lord Reading came as Viceroy in 1921. As a Liberal and an imperialist he was constitutionally incapable of enhancing the position and status of the Indian princes vis-a-vis the paramount power. In his Viceroyalty, many veiled depositions, termed abdication, took place, such as that of the Maharaja of Nabha and the ruler of Indore, the former for his political affiliations and the latter for glaring misconduct. A case of positive interference occurred in Udaipur, where consequent on agrarian disturbances, the old ruler was compelled to leave powers of government to the Crown Prince who took measures of reform in the revenue system. That there was no change in the basis of paramountcy despite the new affableness exhibited in the meetings of the Chamber of Princes is evident from Reading's letter to the Nizam in 1926, which gave a fresh enunciation of the rights of paramountcy. When Nizam demanded reversion of Berar and suggested arbitration in the matter, the Viceroy unceremoniously dismissed the plea. He reminded the Nizam of his status of dependence and inequality in relation

to the Government of India. Reading wrote, "The sovereignty of the British Crown is supreme in India and therefore no ruler of an Indian State can justifiably claim to negotiate with the British Government on an equal footing. Its supremacy is not based only upon treaties and engagements and sanads but exists independently of them, and quite apart from its prerogative in matters relating to foreign powers and policies, it is the right and duty of the British Government, while scrupulously respecting all treaties and engagements with the Indian States, to preserve peace and good order throughout India. The right of the British Government to intervene in the internal affairs of Indian States is another instance of the consequences necessarily involved in the supremacy of the British Crown. The internal, no less than the external security which Ruling Princes enjoy is due ultimately to the protecting power of the British Government. Where Imperial interests are concerned, or the general welfare of the people of a State is seriously and grievously affected by the action of its Government, it is with the Paramount Power that the ultimate responsibility of taking remedial action, if necessary, must lie. The varying degree of internal sovereignty which the Rulers enjoy are all subject to the due exercise by the Paramount Power of this responsibility". This brutally frank enunciation of policy was an unadulterated expression of the position which had emerged during the course of political contact between the Indian states and the British Government in India and which prevailed before 1947. There was no alternation in the status of the Indian princes despite Chamber of Princes and the association of the princes among themselves. The princes greatly resented the attitude of Reading, and when Irwine declared his intention to have frank and informal discussions with the Standing Committee, they presented an Aide Memoire expressing their grievances, and feeling of insecurity. Two reasons were ascribed for it, one political practice which encroached on the rights granted by treaties and two the uncertainty of their future relations with British India.

Notwithstanding the serious rebuff administered by Reading and the action taken by him in the case of some important rulers, the princes generally "were jealous of their status which

they were keen to preserve in the impending constitutional change in India. When the Indian Statutory Commission was appointed in 1927, they demanded that no change should be effected in the Constitution of British India "without due regard being paid to the wrongs specially economic disabilities and without suggesting the means to secure joint consultation between the Indian States and British India in matters of common concern". Consequently the Indian States Committee under Sir Harcourt Butler was appointed "to report upon the relationship between the Paramount Power and the Indian States with particular reference to the rights and obligations arising from treaties and usage". It was also "to inquire into financial and economic relations between British India and the States and to make recommendations for their more satisfactory adjustment". The report of the Butler Committee is important in so far as it held that the treaties, etc. were made with the Crown and "the relationship between the Paramount Power and the Princes should not be transferred without agreement of the latter to a new government in British India responsible to an Indian legislature". It also held that the treaties were "of continuing valid force though they had been supplemented and illumined by political practice". The Committee did not accept the claim of sovereignty of the Indian states, for none of them were independent before coming under British sway. It also refuted the argument that the Crown had limited rights and obligations and stressed the point that the relationship of the states with the paramount power was not merely a "contractual relationship" resting on treaties made more than a century earlier, but it was a "living growing relationship shaped by circumstances and policy, resting on a mixture of history, theory and modern fact". It did not "deny the validity of the treaties and engagements with the Princes", but adopted the view that the paramount power had to "exercise functions of paramountcy beyond the term of treaties, if necessary, for imperial purposes, for the good government of India as a whole, for the good government of individual States, the suppression of barbarous practices, the saving of human life and for dealing with cases in which Rulers have proved unfit for their position". It did not define paramountcy but put forth the

dictum that "paramount must remain paramount; it must fulfil its obligations, defining or adapting itself to the shifting necessities of the time and the progressive development of the States". The Committee also failed to support the claims of princes for relaxation of economic control and reversion to them of many imports. It did not "recommend any general revision of arrangements which on the whole have worked well". The States must bear their share of imperial burden and there was no case for giving them civil jurisdiction on railways. However it emphasised the separate identity of Indian and British India and felt that the formation of a Union of India was the best solution of the many problems which then existed. The Butler Committee also proposed that the conduct of affairs relating to the states should be by the Viceroy and not the Governor-General, as representative of the Crown. These recommendations helped to create a wedge which was effectively drawn between the states and British India in the future.

The report did not satisfy the princes and they questioned the "justification of intervention by the Paramount Power on the ground of imperial necessity and the shifting circumstances of the time". They were averse to any transfer of the powers of paramountcy to a responsible government in India. The princes were opposed to the demand for independence raised by the Congress. It is evident from the discussions at the time that the Indian states were being feared by British publicists and the bureaucracy to hinder progress towards self-government, even of the Dominion Status variety. The Nehru Committee rightly held that the treaties and engagements were with the Government of India and any future government, irrespective of its composition, was competent to determine such relations. It also referred to the States Peoples Conference which demanded political rights for the people of the states. The Nehru Committee favoured a federation of India, but did not want this idea to operate as a hindrance to the establishment of responsible government at the Centre. Thus when the Round Table Conference was convened in 1930, the problem of Indian States had assumed importance in the discussion of the future political set up in British India.



The Congress had launched Civil Disobedience movement for the attainment of independence of India, as the British Government was unable to declare that the object of the Conference was to devise a constitution for Dominion Status. The Congress was not therefore represented at the first Round Table Conference, which was composed of the members chosen by the Viceroy from British India and Indians states and those of the British Parliament. At the commencement of general debate on the political question, whether the constitution of India was to be of a federal character, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru made a fervent appeal to the princes to declare whether they were prepared to join an All-India Federation. He said "we are one India. Let them move forward with the vision of an India which will be one single whole, each part of which may be autonomous and may enjoy absolute independence within its own borders, regulated by proper relations with the rest." He emphasised his vision of a united India with a federal form of government. Maharaja of Bikaner, speaking on behalf of the princes, emphasised the geographical unity of India, despite the political division between British India and Indian India, ruled by the princes, and claimed "we are all members one of another". He welcomed the idea of Dominion Status. Realising diversity in the midst of unity in India, he felt that a federal system alone would meet the situation, and in that context declared "we of the Indian States are willing to take our part in, and make our contribution to the greater prosperity and contentment of India as a whole. I am convinced that we can best make that contribution through a federal system of government composed of the States and British India". He further stressed the point by affirming that "the Princes and States will enter into association with it" depending on the structure of government and safeguards constitutional and fiscal for the preservation of the rights and interests of the states and their subjects. Maharaja of Bikaner also emphasised respect for "our treaty rights and all that they involve. Treaties had been made with the Crown and could not be transferred to any other authority without their consent." This was the burden of other speeches made by the states representatives. Sanctity of treaties and safeguard of their interests

were emphasised by them, and with that reservation the princes at the Round Table Conference expressed their willingness to the formation of a Federation of British Indian provinces and the Indian States. The Nawab of Bhopal also made a significant addition. He said "we can only federate with a self-governing and federal British India". Thus was created a common Indian front.

The new constitution which was presented in the form of the Government of India Act of 1935, provided for a Federation of India to which limited responsibility of government would be transferred. But this Federation could come into being only when such a number of states as were entitled to choose not less than fifty two members of the Council of States and the aggregate population of which would amount to at least one half the total population of the states had acceded to it. Such accession was to be signified by the signing of an Instrument of Accession, which would mention the "matters with respect to which the Federal Legislature may make laws for the States" as well as limitations to which this power was subject. This clause of the act virtually endowed the princes with a veto on the formation of the Federation and consequent establishment of an attenuated form of responsible government at the Centre. A new authority, the Crown Representative, which office was entrusted to the Governor-General, was created to deal with the princely States and to that extent the management of relations with the Indian States was segregated from the purview of the Government of India, which might assume a democratic character. When the Act came into force, the princes hesitated to join the Federation of India and thus the requisite number of states did not accede to it.

The Viceroy sent three officers to explain the provision of the Act and canvass the princes to join the federation. But most of these rulers had been from the very beginning reluctant to merge their identity in a federal government. In a number of conferences they put forth their misgivings and wanted amendments in the provisions of the Bill. Finally when these officers discussed the matter of their accession, it was made evident that in their case, urge for unity was not dominant

and they did not seek it. Menon assumes very rightly that "the question that agitated them was not whether the federation would enable them to contribute to the benefit of India as a whole, but whether their own position would be better and safer inside the federation than outside it". They were therefore angling to safeguard their sovereignty and their financial position. In the Bombay Conference in November 1938, the princes, while reiterating their faith in the federation, "stressed the need for specific and effective safeguards without which the rulers and their successors would find themselves unable, in the fast changing circumstances of the country, to discharge their duties to the Crown, to their dynasties and to their peoples". The Viceroy circulated the revised draft of the Instrument of Accession, to which the reaction of the rulers was that it was unsatisfactory. The growing intensity of popular agitation in many states and the undisguised attitude of hostility to the system of government in the states were instrumental in scaring the princes from joining the federation. The Jam Sahib of Nawanagar gave expression to this feeling in 1940. He made it clear that the "political situation and the hostility in British India towards the states also proved a decisive factor with many princes. It was felt that the attitude of a large section in British India towards the Crown, and the recent experience of organised subversive movements from British India against the States do not in the present circumstances provide that basis which is essential for a closer union between British India and the States". The Political Department also was surreptitiously aiding the intransigence of the rulers. Thus when the war came, the idea of federation had made little progress.

The Congress and the Mnslim League also were opposed to certain features of the Federation, and the British Government was lukewarm about it. Thus, when at the beginning of World War, this part of the Act was abrogated, the states had kept away from unity with the provinces, and no change was made in the structure of their governments, which generally remained as personal and autocratic as in the nineteenth century. The Political Department and the Crown Representative exercised right of paramountcy as before and no

change had come about in the status of the Indian princes in relation to the suzerain power. The Indian political parties, struggling for freedom, suspected their intentions towards the popular aspirations and, not unreasonably, regarded them as handicaps in the march of freedom. The Congress as a body had so far refrained from direct interference in the state affairs, and beyond passive sympathy to the cause of the states subjects had abstained from taking active interest in the affairs of the States Peoples Conference, which, however, was growing in strength and demanded popular democratic government in the states. Many prominent leaders of the Congress were, however, associated with that body. Thus on the eve of Independence, the problem of the Indian States whose rulers were conscious of their status and privileges and who swore by treaties which the Paramount Power had consistently ignored, demanded effective solution before the new Dominion might be established with a truly democratic system of government. The pretensions for freedom of the princely states, the desire of some of them for absolute independence, a separate federation of states or continuance of the suzerainty of the British Crown, were incompatible with the popular craving for full freedom from British yoke and their demand for economic and social reconstruction and building a new India.

Cripp's constitutional proposals, which remained abortive, envisaged "participation of Indian States in the constitution making body" for which purpose they were to be "invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion to their total population as in the case of representatives of British India, as a whole and with the same powers as British Indian members". When the constitution was made it was open to the Indian States to adhere to it or not, but in any case "it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements so far as this may be required in the new situation". As these proposals related mainly to the creation of an interim body to conduct administration during war and help war efforts, the problem of Indian States was not discussed thoroughly. However some princes met Cripps and sought certain clarifications. From the replies given by him it was made evident "that the British Government did not con-

template transferring the paramountcy of the Crown to any other party" and that with a state adhering to the Union, Crown's obligations to it would be automatically dissolved. With the non-adhering states the obligations of the Crown would continue, and they would be enforced through the usual sanctions. As regards treaty revision, he made it clear that it would refer to economic relationship. Explaining his points further, Cripps told the Nizam in a letter that the state would be free to join the Union or not, and in the latter eventuality the existing relations would remain unchanged and the Nizam would not be free "to cease to maintain them". The Cripps proposals did not succeed to find favour with the political parties in India and he precipitately withdrew them. The princes adopted a resolution which was conveyed to Cripps. It affirmed their intention "to make their contribution in every reasonable manner compatible with the sovereignty and integrity of the states, towards the framing of a Constitution for India. The States should be assured, however, that in the event of a number of States not finding it feasible to adhere, the non-adhering States or groups of States, so desiring, would have the right to form a union of their own, with full sovereign status in accordance with a suitable and agreed procedure devised for the purpose". At the time, when it was clear that after the termination of the war, weighty constitutional changes would be made towards giving self-government to India, the princes were keen to safeguard their status. And in that process some of them sought their complete independence, while formation of one or more separate Unions or confederations of states were considered by others. They were, big or small, putting forth claims of sovereignty which had never existed. Many of them were hoping for the permanent continuance of British power in India as a guarantee of their position which was then assailed by the statements of some Indian leaders and the rising movement for constitutional government in the states conducted by the All-India States' Peoples Conference. The princes sought security against their own subjects and the possible inroads on their sovereignty by a free democratic India.

Since 1935, the States Peoples' movement had been gathering strength. While the princes were making every endeavour to preserve "their internal autonomy and monopoly over power", the agitation for a democratic responsible government in the states gained momentum. Though initially and for long the Indian National Congress had maintained its attitude of benevolent non-intervention and Mahatma Gandhi had advised the Congress not to identify itself with agitation in the states, by 1939, it was compelled to revise its policy. While the Haripura Congress promised its "moral support and sympathy", and individual Congress-men were allowed to participate in the people's movements in the states, the predominant mood was that the "burden of carrying on the struggle for freedom must fall on the people of the states". Mahatma Gandhi, in December 1938, made a categorical statement, decrying the non-interventionist policy of the Congress, that the Congress would have to offer effective interference "when the call comes". He added, "There is no half-way house between total extinction of the States, and the Princes making their people responsible for the administration of their states and themselves becoming trustees for the peoples, taking an earned commission for their labours". The Tripuri Congress brought the Congress and the All-India States People's Conference closer. The repressive policy pursued by princes, hastened integration of the popular movement in the states with that in the British India. Meanwhile the Government of India had stressed the need for good government in the states and adequate satisfaction of popular demands. In many major states, some reforms were executed as well, but neither the scope nor the content of these reform measures was such as to reduce autocratic power or the share taken by the princes for their own use of the state revenues. The legislative Chambers, wherever established failed to satisfy the people's aspirations. The situation in smaller states of Gujarat, Kathiawar or Orissa was quite deplorable. They had neither the resources nor the will to introduce effective machinery for justice and police. The Government of India therefore took up the project of grouping these states, under the Attachment Act passed by Parliament in 1944, merged the taluks of Gujarat and Western India with the neighbouring

states. The princes opposed the measure owing to their apprehension that smaller states would disappear. In 1945, the princes grew conscious of the impending change in Indian political situation and considered the problem of some adjustment between the states and British India. In June 1945 resolution of the Committee of Princes and Ministers realised the weakness of their position in the new circumstances, and felt that the "British Government will not be in a position in a Dominion India effectively to fulfil its obligations of defence or to safeguard non-acceding States against economic strangulation or discrimination by the Dominion Government". Hence it recommended that the "States should internally set up their houses in order and externally should align themselves with the forces of progress". Well governed progressive units alone could help them in future negotiations. The Chamber of Princes also in January 1946, desired that popular institutions with elective majorities should be established to "ensure close and effective association of the people with the governance of the States". These pious sentiments evoked only partial response from the princes, and when the Cabinet Mission arrived, the states were gripped by popular agitation on the one side and the last ditch struggle by the princes to maintain their privileges.

While announcing the despatch of Cabinet Mission to India, Prime Minister Atlee, in the House of Commons, referring to the Indian States, wished that the statesmen of British India and Indian India would work out a solution of the problem of bringing together in one great polity, these disparate constituent parts. Thus before the Cabinet Mission issued its statement of May 16, 1946, outlining the steps for the framing of the constitution of a free India and the formation of an interim government at the Centre, in a memorandum which they presented to the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, outlined the policy of His Majesty's Government in regard to paramountcy. It affirmed the intention of the Crown not "to initiate any change in their (States) relationship with the Crown or the rights guaranteed by the treaties and engagements without their consent". It also expressed British resolve to give independence to India and the intention of the princes to take their share in the attainment of that end. Until the Constitution was framed,

in the interim period, the Cabinet Delegation affirmed that "paramountcy will remain in operation, and the British Government...will not in any circumstances transfer paramountcy to an Indian Government". They expected the states to "make their contribution to the framing of the structure and to take their due place in it when it is completed. In order to facilitate this they will doubtless strengthen their position by doing everything possible to ensure that their administrations conform to the highest standards". They desired the princes "to place themselves in close and constant touch with public opinion in their states by means of representative institutions". Also negotiations would have to be conducted between the states and the leaders of British India, and that till the completion of such, existing arrangements would continue. This was done to ensure the continuance of economic relationship between the two wings and maintenance of proper communications. The Cabinet Delegation in conclusion made clear that "His Majesty's Government will cease to exercise the power of paramountcy". Consequently rights of the States under paramountcy would cease to exist and the rights surrendered by them would revert to them. Thus "political arrangement between the States on the one side and the British Crown and British India on the other will.....be brought to an end. The void will have to be filled either by the States entering into a federal relationship with the succession Government or Governments in British India, or failing this, entering into particular political arrangements with it or them". In their May 16, statement the Cabinet Delegation therefore made provision for the admission of State's representatives in the Constituent Assembly when it took up the consideration of the Union Constitution. They were to have 93 members in it. They envisaged the formation of a Union of India, embracing both British India and the Indian States which would deal with foreign affairs, defence and communications, with powers necessary to raise finances. In the legislature and executive of such a Union the states' representatives were to be invited. The states were to retain subjects and powers other than those ceded to the Union. The efforts of the Delegation were directed towards facilitating the formation of the Constituent Assembly



but owing to the conflicting ideas of the Congress and the League, the path to such a development was not smooth.

Probably encouraged by the division in British India, the Chamber of Princes, under the Chancellorship of the Nawab of Bhopal, adopted a negative attitude. In his letter to the Viceroy, on May 17, 1946, the Chancellor sought some assurance of concessions and privileges during the interim period. He demanded the right of States to maintain their own armed forces, limitation on the power of the federation to raise taxation from the States, and continuance of their rights in respect of communications. He also wanted the method and manner of representation of the States to be determined by the rulers; and inhibition on the Union Legislature to consider any question affecting the States without majority of their representatives voting in its favour. Most important of these demands was that the States should be free to form a group or groups amongst themselves for such purposes as might be mutually agreed upon; and that "the Constitution-making body should not discuss or make any recommendations in respect of the form of government in the States or the reigning dynasties". There was a growing tendency among some of them to assert their independence on the expiry of paramountcy. It appears that the princes were prepared to submit to white supremacy but were reluctant to accept control by their own countrymen. The Bhopal group opposed the resolution on the Declaration of Objectives adopted by the Constituent Assembly, as it contemplated setting up of an Independent Sovereign Republic composed of Indian States and British Indian provinces, deriving its powers and authority from the people. They held that the entry of the States into the federation was voluntary. They were not prepared to accept the principle of power being derived from the people, and thereby stuck to the theory of despotic rule. The resolution of 29 January 1947, by the Conference of Rulers in Bombay made their intentions clear. It held that after the termination of the interim period, paramountcy would revert to the princes and not to the new Government of India, and that the Union Government would exercise only delegated functions. It held the view that the entry of States in the Union of India would be only by negotiation and the final decision

would rest with each State. The Union would comprise the territories of only such States as might decide to join it. Also the States would retain all subjects and powers not ceded by them to the Union. In effect it meant that "every State shall continue to retain its sovereignty and all rights and powers except those that have been expressly delegated by it". Further that "the Constitution of each State, its territorial integrity, and the succession of its reigning dynasty in accordance with custom, law and usage of the State, shall not be interfered with by the Union or any Unit thereof, nor shall the existing boundaries of State be altered except by its free consent and approval". It also referred to the selection of representatives to the Constituent Assembly, which was to be made by the princes. This document and the speeches made at the time exhibit the hostile attitude of a section of the princes to the whole idea of an independent India framing its constitution on the basis of a Union of all its parts.

However, the incorrigibility of this group led by the Nawab of Bhopal, and including major states like Hyderabad, Travancore, Kashmir, led to the emergence of another group with Bikaner, Patiala, Baroda and Jaipur, which resented strongly their attitude. It pleaded for States participation in the Constituent Assembly and deprecated their taking sides in the Congress League differences. The rulers of Cochin and Baroda declared their intention to join the Constituent Assembly and repudiated the intermediacy of the Negotiating Committee which had been formed by the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes. This revolt by these leading States tempered the tone of the Negotiating Committee which, in March, accepted the principle that 50 per cent or more of the total representatives of the States would be elected by the legislatures or other electoral colleges. Meanwhile Atlee's statement of 20 February 1947, brought forth a radical change in the situation and introduced the element of expeditiousness in coming to decisions. He declared the British Government's intention to transfer power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948. In the context of the Indian States, he said "His Majesty's Government do not intend to hand over the powers and obligations under Paramountcy to any Government of British India. It is

not intended to bring Paramountcy, as a system, to a conclusion earlier than the date of the final transfer of power, but it is contemplated that for the intervening period the relations of the Crown with individual States may be adjusted by agreement". Lord Mountbatten was appointed Governor-General to implement the new objective. After discussing the matter with the political parties, he issued a plan on 3 June 1947 by which division of India between two Dominions of India and Pakistan was contemplated. Also he declared 15 August 1947 as the date for final transfer of power. As regards the Indian States, no change was envisaged in the policy outlined by the Cabinet Mission. In his press conference on June 4, the Viceroy gave expression to the policy as regards the States. He made it clear that "the Indian States cannot enter separately as Dominions". He also said that "with the lapse of paramountcy the States would be free agents to enter either Constituent Assembly or make such arrangement as might be necessary". He categorically stated that the British Government would not have any negotiations with the States. "We hand back paramountcy and in the process we offer our services in helping them to make the necessary contact with the Government of India and with the respective Constituent Assemblies to come together and make their agreement". The Indian States ought to know where their interests lie. It was open to them to choose the particular Constituent Assembly, but warned that despite their freedom to select "geography would play a large part in their decision". The choice of the States was strictly limited and the British Government and particularly the Viceroy did not encourage their existing as independent states.

The All-India Congress Committee made its attitude towards the States clear in its resolution of 15 June 1947. It welcomed the association of Indian States in the work of the Constituent Assembly and hoped for cooperation of all of them. It stressed the importance of the progress leading to responsible government taking place rapidly in the Indian States, and hoped that "all States will initiate these changes so as to keep in line with the fast-changing situation in India and at the same time produce contentment and self-reliance in their people". In the interest of the security of India it was inevitable that there

would be certain limitations on the powers of the States. The Congress Committee affirmed that it "cannot admit the right of any State in India to declare its independence and to live in isolation from the rest of India. That would be a denial of the course of Indian history and of the objectives of the Indian people today". Hence it hoped that the rulers of the States "will in full cooperation with their people enter as democratic units in the Indian Union." On the lapse of paramountcy, it affirmed that it would not affect the privileges and obligations as well as the subsisting rights as between the States and the Government of India, and these relationships would not be exhausted by the lapse of paramountcy. It could not lead to the independence of the states, and as "sovereignty resides with the people" lapse of paramountcy ending the relationship of the States to the Crown would not affect adversely the inherent rights of the people. Pandit Nehru's speech made a vehement denunciation of the move for independence of a state and he declared "that any recognition of any such independence by any Foreign Power, whichever it may be and wherever it may be, will be considered an unfriendly act". It may be presumed that the British Government also did not favour the existence of any State as independent and Mountbatten strove to prevent such a development and influenced the states to accede to the Indian Union on three subjects, Defence, External Affairs and Communications, which was the minimum basis of federation. The All-India States Peoples Conference also played a vital role in preventing the formation of independent states and facilitated their accession to the Union.

V.P. Menon, the first Secretary to the Ministry of States, has in his book 'The Story of the Integration of States' described the process by which the States acceded to the Union of India. On his advice an Instrument of Accession was presented to the rulers of States, big or small, which provided for their accession on the three subjects mentioned above. Moreover a document known as the Standstill Agreement was also prepared which related to the continuance of all agreements and administrative arrangements as to matters of common concern, until new arrangements in this behalf were made.

It was also made clear that there would be no financial commitments. There was imperative need for quick action because paramountcy was to lapse on 15 August and in the absence of even a limited accession of states to the Union, serious void would be created. Some states were dreaming of independence, while some others were prepared to throw in their lot with Pakistan. The idea of a separate Union of States, which Urmila Phadnis has called 'Statistan', with all its ugly features had also been in the air. Communal trouble had started in all its grimness in Northern India, which made non-Muslim states seriously consider their future plight. The lack of physical contiguity made the contemplation of an independent Union of States unrealistic. This made many prominent princes determined to join the Indian Union. Travancore had initially decided to remain independent, but the people there compelled the Prince and his Diwan to accede to the Indian Union. Bhopal also soon decided to join the Union of India. Except for Hyderabad, Junagarh and Kashmir, all other states on the Indian side had signed the Instrument of Accession and the Standstill Agreement before 15 August and this helped the formation of a compact Union of India. Menon's comment on the development is significant. He wrote "By the policy of accession we had ensured the fundamental unity of the country. India had become one federation, with the provinces and the States as integral parts. The Standstill Agreement had provided the basis for retaining intact the many agreements and administrative arrangements which had been built up over nearly a century for ensuring that all-India interests were safeguarded, and which, with the termination of paramountcy had threatened to disappear and in the process thrown the whole country into a state of confusion". Thus was established a unified political structure.

Hyderabad was later compelled by police action to join the Union, and Junagarh Nawab had to leave his state as the people could not bear to be part of Pakistan. And Kashmir was forced to accede to India when it was invaded by raiders instigated by Pakistan. Thus was completed the Union of India, and divisive forces were suppressed. From the accession to actual merger or integration of the state territories with

Indian dominion was a rapid process and thereby a uniform system of administration was ensured throughout the country. The princes being assured of a privy purse and personal property and privileges agreed to the merger of their states. The rulers, as Phadnis has rightly concluded, "in view of the compulsive political factors and public opinion could have no option but to respond to the will of the people and retain as much power and position as they could." These political conditions thus hastened the end of a system which had outgrown its utility and was an anachronism. The autocratic state system propped up by a foreign government could not survive after the demise of imperialism in the free atmosphere of the rule of the people.

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